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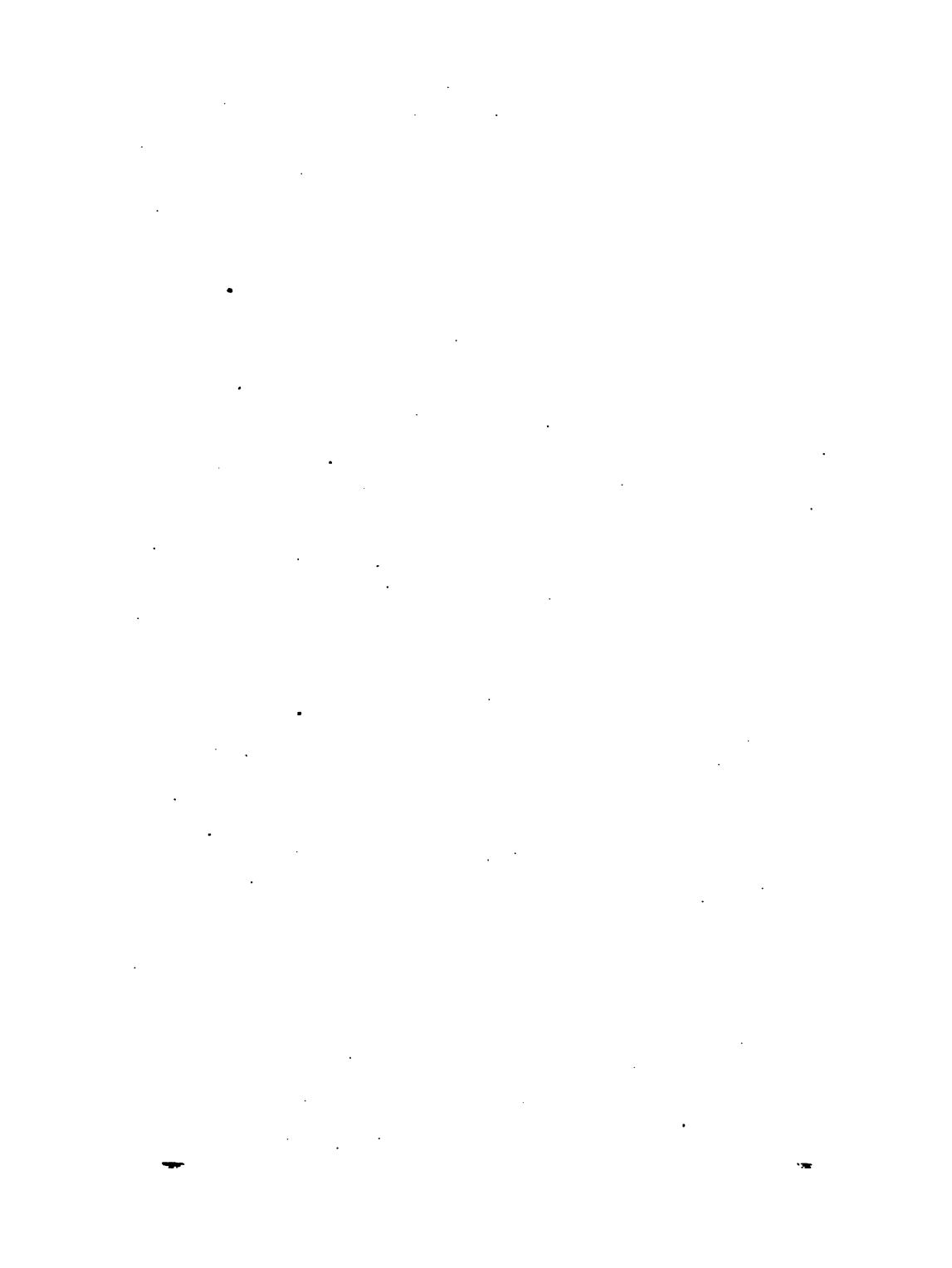
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“HAWORTH'S.”

VOL. II.



“HAWORTH'S”

A Novel

BY

FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

AUTHOR OF “THAT LASS O' LOWREY'S”

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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B u n g a y

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“HAWORTH'S.”

CHAPTER I.

MRS. HAWORTH AND GRANNY DIXON.

ABOUT this time a change appeared in little Mrs. Haworth. Sometimes when they sat together, Haworth found himself looking up suddenly and feeling that her eyes were fixed upon him, and at such times she invariably met his glance with a timid, startled expression, and released herself from it as soon as she had the power.

She had never been so tender and lavish with her innocent caresses, but there was continuously a tremulous watchfulness in her manner, which was almost suggestive of fear. It was not fear of him, however. She clung to him with all the strength of her love. At night when he returned home, however late, he was sure of finding her waiting patiently for him, and in the morning

when he left the house he was never so early that she was not at his service. The man began to quail before her, and grow restless in secret, and be haunted, when he awakened in the night, by his remembrance of her.

“She is on the look-out for something,” he said to himself, fearfully. “What have they been saying to her?”

On her part, when she sat alone, she used to try and think the matter out, and set it straight and account for it.

“It's the strikes,” she said, “as has set them agen him and made 'em hard an' forgetful of all he's done. They'd never have spoke so if they'd been theirselves.”

She could scarcely have told what she had heard, or how the first blow had struck home. She only knew that here and there she had heard at first a rough jeer and then a terrible out-spoken story, which, in spite of her disbelief, filled her with dread. The man who first flung the ill-flavoured story at her stopped half-way through it, the words dying on his lips at the sight of her face.

It happened in one of her pensioner's cottages, and she rose from her chair trembling.

"I didn't think," she said, with unconscious pathos, "as the world could be so ignorant and wicked."

But as the ill-feeling became more violent, she met with the same story again and again, and often with new and worse versions in forms she could not combat. She began to be haunted by vague memories of things she had not comprehended. A sense of pain followed her. She was afraid, at times, to go to the cottages, lest she should be confronted with something which would overwhelm her. Then she began to search her son's face with a sense of finding some strangeness in it. She watched him wistfully when he had so far forgotten her presence as to be almost unconscious of it. One night, having thrown himself upon a sofa and fallen into a weary sleep, he suddenly started up from it to find her standing close by him, looking down, her face pale, her locked fingers moving nervously.

"What is it?" he exclaimed. "What ails you?"

He was startled by her falling upon her knees at his side, crying, and laying her shaking hand upon his shoulder.

“You was having a bad dream, my dear,” she said,—“a bad dream. I—I scarcely knowed your face, Jem—it was so altered.”

He sank back upon his cushions and stared at her. He knew he had been having no bad dream. His dreams were not half so evil and bitter when he slept as they were in these days when he wakened.

“You always had such a good face, Jem,” she said, “and such a kind one. When you was a boy——”

He stopped her almost sullenly.

“I'm not a boy now,” he said. “That's put away and done with.”

“No,” she answered, “that's true, my dear; but you've lived an innocent life, an'—an' never done no wrong—no more than you did when you was one. And your face was so altered.”

Her voice died away into a silence which, somehow, neither of them could break.

It was Granny Dixon who revealed the truth

in its barest form. Perhaps no man nor woman in Broxton knew more of it than this respectable ancient matron. Haworth and his iniquities had been the spice of her later life. The fact that his name was being mentioned in a conversation never escaped her; she discovered it as if by magic, and invariably commanded that the incident under discussion be repeated at the top of the reciter's voice for her benefit, occasionally somewhat to the confusion of the honest matron in question.

How it had happened that she had not betrayed all to Mrs. Haworth at once was a mystery to remain unsolved. During the little woman's visits to the cottage, Mrs. Briarley existed in a chronic condition of fear and trembling.

"She'll be out wi' it some o' these days, mark me," she would quaver to Janey. "An' th' Lord knows, I would na be theer fur nowt when she does."

But she did not do it at first. Mrs. Briarley had a secret conviction that the fact that she did not do so was due entirely to iniquity. She had

seen her sit peering from under her brows at their guest as the simple creature poured forth her loving praise of her son, and at such times it was always Mrs. Briarley’s province to repeat the conversation for her benefit.

“Ay,” Mrs. Dixon would comment with an evil smile, “that’s him! That’s Haworth! He’s a noice chap — is Haworth. *I* know him.”

Mrs. Haworth learned in time to fear her and to speak timidly in her presence, rarely referring to the subject of her boy’s benefactions.

“Only as it wouldn’t be nat’ral,” she said once to Mrs. Briarley, “I should think she was set agen him.”

“Eh! bless us,” was Mrs. Briarley’s answer. “Yo’ need na moind *her*. She’s set agen ivverybody. She’s th’ nowtest owd piece i’ Christendom.”

A few days after Haworth had awakened to find his mother standing near him, Mrs. Haworth paid a visit to the Briarleys. She took with her a basket, which the poor of Broxton had long since learned to know. In this case it contained

stockings for the little Briarleys and a dress or so for the baby.

When she had bestowed her gifts and seated herself, she turned to Granny Dixon with some tremor of manner.

"I hope you're well, ma'am," she said.

Granny Dixon made no reply. She sat bent over in her chair, regarding her for a few seconds with unblinking gaze. Then she slowly pointed with her thin, crooked finger to the little presents.

"He sent 'em, did he?" she trumpeted forth.
"Haworth?"

Mrs. Haworth quailed before her.

"Yes, ma'am," she answered, "leastways——"

Granny Dixon stopped her.

"He did nowt o' th' soart," she cried. "Tha'rt leein'!"

The little woman made an effort to rise, turned pale, and sat down again.

"Ma'am——" she began.

Granny Dixon's eyes sparkled.

"Tha'rt leein'," she repeated. "He's th' worst chap i' England, an' aw Broxton knows it."

Her victim uttered a low cry of pain. Mrs. Briarley had left the room, and there was no one to help her. All the hints and jeers she had heard rushed back to her, but she struggled to stand up against them.

“It ain't true,” she said. “It ain't—true.”

Granny Dixon was just beginning to enjoy herself. A difference of opinion with Mrs. Briarley, which had occurred a short time before, had prepared her for the occasion. She knew that nothing would so much demoralise her relative and hostess as this iniquitous outbreak.

“They've been warnin' me to keep quiet an' not tell thee,” she answered, “but I towd 'em I'd tell thee when I wur i' th' humour, an' I'm i' th' humour now. Will Ffrench wur a devil, but *he's* a bigger one yet. He kep' thee away because he did na want thee to know. He set aw th' place by the ears. A decent woman would na cross his doorstep, nor a decent mon, fur aw his brass —afore tha coom. Th' lot as he used to ha' down fro' Lunnen an' Manchester wur a shame to th' town. *I've* seed 'em—women in paint and feathers, an' men as decent lasses hide fro'. A

good un' wur he? Ay, he wur a good un, for sure."

She sat and chuckled a moment, thinking of Sararann's coming terror and confusion. She had no objection to Haworth's moral lapses herself, but she meant to make the most of them while she was at it. She saw nothing of the anguish in the face from which all the fresh, almost girlish colour had faded.

"An' yo' did na know as they wur na gentle-folk," she proclaimed again. "Tha thowt they wur ladies an' gentlemen when tha coom in on 'em th' fust neet tha set foot i' th' house. A noice batch o' ladies they wur! An' he passed 'em off on thee! He wur sharp enow fur that, trust him. Ladies, bless us! *I* heard tell on it—an' so did aw Broxton."

The wounded creature gathered all her strength to rise from her chair. She stood pressing her hands against her heart, swaying and deadly pale.

"He has been a good son to me," she said. "A good son—an' I can't believe it. You wouldn't yourself if—you was his mother, an' knew him as—as I do."

She made her way to the door just as Mrs. Briarley came in. One glance told that excellent matron that the long-dreaded calamity had arrived.

“ What’s she been up to ? ” she demanded.
“ Lord ha’ mercy ! what’s she been up to now ? ”

“ She’s been tellin’ me,” faltered the departing guest, “ that my son’s a bad man an’ a shame to me. Let me go, ma’am—for I’ve never heard talk like this before—an’ its made me a bit weak an’—queer.”

And she slipped past and was gone. Mrs. Briarley’s patience deserted her. A full sense of what Granny Dixon’s worst might be burst in upon her; a remembrance of her own manifold wrongs and humiliations added itself to this sense ; for the moment discretion ceased to appear the better part of valour.

“ What has tha been sayin’ ? ” she cried.
“ What has tha been sayin’ ? Out wi’ it.”

“ I’ve been telling her what tha wur afeared to tell her,” chuckled Mrs. Dixon, with exultation.
“ I towd thee I would, an’ I’ve done it.”

Mrs. Briarley made no more ado. She set the

baby down upon an adjacent chair with a resonant sound, and then fell upon the miserable old woman and seizing her by the shoulders shook her until her cap flew off and danced upon her back, and her mouth opened and shut as if worked by a spring.

“Tha brazent, hard-hearted besom, tha!” she cried as she shook. “Tha ill-farrant nowt, tha! as nivver did no good i’ thy days, an’ can na bear as no one else should. I dunnot care if I nivver see thy brass as long as I live. If tha wur noine i’stead o’ ninety-five I’d give thee a hidin’, tha brazent, hard-hearted owd piece!”

Her strength failed her and she loosened her hold and sat down and wept aloud behind the baby, and Mrs. Dixon fell back in her chair, an unpleasant heap, without breath to speak a word or strength to do anything but clutch wildly at her cap, and so remained shrunken and staring.

CHAPTER II.

HAWORTH'S DEFENDER.

MRS. HAWORTH made her way along the streets with weak and lagging steps. She had been a brisk walker in the days of her country life, and even now was fonder of going here and there on foot than of riding in state, as her son would have preferred. But now the way before her seemed long. She knew where she was going.

“There's one of 'em as knows an' will tell me,” she said to herself. “She can't have no cruel feeling against him, bein' a lady, an' knowin' him so well. An' if it's true—not as I believe it, Jem, my dear, for I don't—she'll break it to me gentle.”

“Not as I believe, Jem, my dear, for I don't,” she said to herself again and again.

Her mind went back to the first hour of his life, when he had lain, a strong-limbed child, on

her weak arm, the one comfort given to her out of her wretched marriage. She thought of him again as he had been a lad, growing and thriving in spite of hunger and cold, growing and thriving in spite of cruelty and wrong which broke her health and threw her helpless upon charity. He had been sharper and bolder than other boys, and always steadfast to his determination.

"He was always good to me," she said. "Child an' man he's never forgot me, or been unmindful. If there'd have been wrong in his life, who'd have been liker to see it than me?"

It was to Rachel Ffrench she was going, and when at last she reached the end of her journey, and was walking up the pathway to the house, Rachel Ffrench, who stood at the window, saw her, and was moved to wonder by her pallor and feebleness.

The spring sunshine was so bright outside that the room seemed quite dark when she came into it, and even after she had seated herself the only light in it seemed to emanate from the figure of Miss Ffrench herself, who stood opposite to her in a dress of some thin white stuff

and with strongly fragrant yellow hyacinths at her neck and in her hand.

“ You are tired,” she said. “ You should not have walked.”

The woman looked up at her timidly.

“ It isn't that,” she answered. “ It's somethin' else.”

She suddenly stretched forth her hands into the water.

“ I've came here to hear about my boy,” she said. “ I want to hear from one as knows the truth, an'—will tell me.”

Miss Ffrench was not of a sympathetic nature. There existed few young women with more nerve and self-poise at trying times, and she had not at any previous period been specially touched by Mrs. Haworth; but just now she was distressed singularly.

“ What do you want to know,” she asked, “ that I can tell you ? ”

She was not prepared for what happened next, and she lost a little placidity through it. The simple, loving creature fell at her feet and caught hold of her dress, sobbing.



"He's thirty-three years old," she cried, "an' I've never seen the day when he's give me a hurt. He's been the pride of my life an' the hope of it. I've looked up to him and prayed for him an' believed in him—an' they say he's black with shameful sin—an' I don't know him, nor never did, for he's deceived me from first to last."

The yellow hyacinths fell from Miss Ffrench's hand on the carpet, and she looked down at them instead of at the upturned face.

"Who said it?" she asked.

But she was not answered.

"If it's true—not that I believe it, for I don't—if it's true, what is there left for me, as loved and honoured him—where's my son I thanked God for day an' night? Where's my boy as paid me for all I bore? He's never been—he's never been at all. I've never been his mother nor he's never been my son. If it's true—not as I believe it, for I don't—where is he?"

Miss Ffrench bent down and picked up her hyacinths. She wondered, as she bent down, what her reply would be.

“Will you believe *me*?” she asked, as she rose up again.

“Yes, ma'am,” she was answered; “I know I may do it—thank God!”

“Yes, you may,” said Miss Ffrench, without flinching in the least. “I can have no feeling for or against him. I can have no end to serve, one way or the other. It is not true. It is a lie. He is all you have believed.”

She helped her to rise, and made her sit down again in an easy-chair, and then herself withdrew a little, and stood leaning against the window, looking at her.

“He has done more good in Broxton than any other man who lives,” she said. “He has made it what it is. The people who hate him and speak ill of him are those he has benefited most. It is the way of their class, I have heard before, and now I believe it to be true. They have said worse things of men who deserve them as little as he does. He has enemies whom he has conquered, and they will never forgive him.”

She discovered a good many things to say, having once begun, and she actually found a

kind of epicurean enjoyment in saying them in a manner the most telling. She always liked to do a thing very well.

But, notwithstanding this, the time seemed rather long before she was left alone to think the matter over.

Before she had said many words her visitor was another woman. Life's colour came back to her, and she sat crying softly, tears of sheer joy and relief.

"I knowed it couldn't be true," she said. "I knowed it, an' oh ! thank you, ma'am, with all a mother's heart!"

"To think," she said, smiling and sobbing, "as I should have been so wicked as to let it weigh on me, when I knowed so well as it couldn't never be. I should be almost 'shamed to look him in the face if I didn't know how good he was, an' how ready he'd be to forgive me."

When at last she was gone, Miss Ffrench threw herself into the chair she had left, rather languidly. She was positively tired.

As she did so she heard a sound. She rose

hastily and turned towards the folding-doors leading into the adjoining room. They had been partially closed, and as she turned they were pushed aside and some one came through them.

It was Jem Haworth.

He was haggard and dishevelled, and as he approached her he walked unsteadily.

“I was in there through it all,” he said, “and I heard every word.”

She was herself again, at once. She knew she had not been herself ten minutes before.

“Well,” she said.

He came up and stood near her—an almost abject tremor upon him.

“Will you listen to what I have got to say?” he said.

She made a cold gesture of assent.

“If she’d gone to some and heard what they had to tell,” he said, “it would have killed her. It’s well she came here.”

She saw the dark colour rush to his face and knew what was coming.

“It’s all true, by ——” he burst out, “every word of it!”

"When I was in there," he went on, with a gesture towards the other room, "I swore I'd tell you. Make the best and the worst of it. It's all true—that and more."

He sat down in a chair and rested his forehead on his hands.

"Things has begun to go again me," he said. "They never did before. I've been used to tell myself there was a kind of luck in keeping it from her. Th' day it comes on her, full force, I'm done for. I said in there that you should know, at least. It's all true."

"I knew it was true," remarked Miss Ffrench, "all the time."

"*You* knew!" he cried out. "*You!*"

"I have known it from the first," she answered. "Did you think it was a secret?"

He turned hot and cold as he looked at her.

"Then, by George, you'd a reason for saying what you did. What was it?"

She remained silent, looking out of the open window across the flower-bright garden. She watched a couple of yellow butterflies eddying above a purple hyacinth for several seconds

before she spoke, and then did so slowly and absently.

“I don't know the reason,” she said. “It was a strange thing for *me* to do.”

“It wasn't to save *me* aught,” he returned. “That's plain enough.”

“No,” she answered, “it was not to save you. I am not given to pitying people, but I think that for the time I wanted to save *her*. It was a strange thing,” she said softly, “for *me* to do.”

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN MURDOCH.

SHE had never spoken to Murdoch openly of his secret labour. He was always conscious that she knew and understood; he had seen her knowledge in her face almost from the first, but they had exchanged no words on the subject. He had never wavered from his resolve since he had made it. Whatever his tasks had been in the day, or however late his return was at night, he did not rest until he had given a certain number of hours to this work. Often Christian and his mother, wakening long after midnight, heard him moving about in his closed room. He grew gaunt and hollow-eyed, but he did not speak of what he was doing, and they never knew whether he was hopeful or despairing.

Without seeing very much of the two women, he still found himself led to think of them

constantly. He was vaguely conscious that since their interview in the graveyard he had never felt free from Christian Murdoch. More than once her mother's words came back to him with startling force. “She sits and looks on and says nothing. She asks nothing, but her eyes force me to speak.”

He always knew that she was watching him. Often he looked up and met her glance, and somehow it was always a kind of shock to him. He knew that she was wondering and asking herself questions she could not ask him.

“If I gave it up or flagged,” he told himself, “she would know without my saying a word.”

There had grown in her a beauty of a dark, foreign type. The delicate olive of her skin and the dense blackness of her eyes and hair caused her to be considered a novelty worth commenting upon by the men of Broxton society, which was of a highly critical nature. She went out a great deal as the spring advanced, and began to know the place and people better. She developed a pathetic eagerness to make friends and understand those around her. One

day she went alone to Broxton Chapel, and after sitting through one of Mr. Higgins's most sulphurous sermons, came home in a brooding mood.

"Why did you go?" Murdoch was roused to ask.

"I thought," she answered, "it might make me better. I thought I would try."

Not long afterward, when he had gone out of the house and she was left sitting with Mrs. Murdoch, she suddenly looked up from the carpet on which her eyes had been fixed and asked her a question.

"Is it true that I am beginning to be very handsome?" she demanded.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Murdoch, "it is true."

A dark cloud settled upon her face and her eyes fell again.

"I heard some men in the street speak aloud to each other about it," she said. "Do they speak so of *all* women who are handsome?"

"I don't know," her companion replied, surveying her critically and with some anxiety.

“They used to speak so of—*her*,” she said, slowly. “*She* was a beautiful woman. They were always telling her of it again and again, and I used to go and look at myself in the glass and be glad that I was thin and dark and ugly, and that they laughed at me. I wanted to be hideous. Once, when I was a child, a man said, ‘Never mind, she will be a beauty some day—like her mother !’ and I flew at him and struck him, and then I ran away to my room and fell down upon my knees and said the first prayer I ever said in my life. I said, ‘Oh, God !—if there is a God—strike me dead ! Oh, God !—if there is a God—strike me dead !’”

The woman who listened shuddered.

“*Am I like—anybody ?*” she said next.

“I do not know,” she was answered.

“I could not tell myself if I were,” she said. “I have watched for it so long that I should not see it if it had come. I look every day. Perhaps I am and do not know. Perhaps that is why they look at me in the street, and speak of me aloud as I go by.”

Her voice fell into a whisper. She threw

herself on her knees and laid her head upon the woman's lap.

"Cover me with your arms," she said. "Cover me so that you may not see my face."

She was constantly moved to these strange outbursts of feeling in these days. A few nights later, as he sat at work after midnight, Murdoch fancied that he heard a sound outside his door. He went to it and opened it, and found himself confronting the girl as she sat crouched upon the lowest step of the stairway.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I could not go to sleep," she answered. "I could not stop thinking of what you were doing. It seemed as if I should have a little share in it if I were here. Are you,"—almost timidly,— "are you tired?"

"Yes," he answered, "I am tired."

"Are you—any nearer?"

"Sometimes I think so,—but so did he."

She rose slowly.

"I will go away," she said. "It would only disturb you to know I was here."

She moved a step upward and then paused uncertainly.

“You told me once,” she said, “that there was no reason why I should not be as good and happy as any other woman. Are you sure of what you said?”

“For God's sake do not doubt it in that way,” he said.

She stood looking down at him, one hand resting upon the balustrade, her dark eyes wild with some strange emotion.

“I lie awake at night a great deal,” she said, “and I am always thinking of what has gone by. Sometimes—lately—I have wished that—I had forgiven her.”

“I,” he answered, “have wished so too.”

“I know that,” she returned. “But I did not, and it is too late. Everything is over for her, and it is too late. For a long time I was glad, but now—I suppose I am repenting. She did not repent. She suffered, but she did not repent. I think I am repenting.”

When he returned to his room he found he could not settle down to work again. He walked

up and down restlessly for some time, and at last threw himself upon the bed and lay wide awake thinking in the darkness.

It always cost him a struggle to shut out the world and life and concentrate himself upon his labour in those days. A year before it would have been different ; now there was always a battle to be fought. There were dreams to be held at bay, and memories which his youth and passion made overwhelming forces.

But to-night, somehow, it was Christian Murdoch who disturbed him. There had been a terrible wistfulness in her voice—a wistfulness mingled with long-repressed fear, which had touched him more than all. And so, when sleep came to him, it happened that her figure stood out alone from all others before him, and was his last thought.

Among those whom Christian Murdoch learned to know was Janey Briarley. She saw her first in the streets, and again in Mrs. Murdoch's kitchen, where she occasionally presented herself, attired in a huge apron, to assist in a professional capacity upon "cleanin' days." The baby having

learned to walk, and Mr. Briarley being still an inactive member of the household, it fell upon Janey and her mother to endeavour to add, by such efforts as lay in their power, to their means of providing for the eleven. With the assistance of the apron, Janey was enabled to make herself generally useful upon all active occasions.

“ Hoo's a little thing, but hoo's a sharp un,” Mrs. Briarley was wont to say. “ Hoo con work like a woman. I dunnot know what I'd ha' done wi'out her. Yo' try her, Missus, an' see.”

She spent each Saturday afternoon in Mrs. Murdoch's kitchen, and it was not long before Christian drifted into an acquaintance with her. The first time she saw her on her knees before the fireplace, surrounded by black-lead brushes, bath - brick, and “ pipe - clay ” and vigorously polishing the fender, she stopped short to look at her.

“ How old are you ? ” she asked, after a little while.

“ I'm twelve, goin' on thirteen,” was the reply, without any cessation of the rubbing.

The girl leaned against the side of the mantel and surveyed her critically.

" You don't look that old," she said.

" Ay, but I do," returned the child, " i' tha looks at my face. I'm stunted wi' nussin', that's what mak's me so little."

She gave her face a sharp turn upward, that it might be seen.

" I've had enow to mak' me look owd, I can tell thee," she remarked.

The interest she saw in her countenance inspired her. She became comparatively garrulous upon the subject of the family anxieties. " Feyther" figured in his usual unenviable *rôle*, and Granny Dixon was presented in strong colours; but finally she pulled herself up and changed the subject with startling suddenness.

" I've seed thee mony a toime afore," she said, " an' I've heerd folk talk about thee. I nivver heerd *him* say owt about thee, though."

" Whom do you mean ?" asked Christian, with a little frown.

" Mester Murdoch. We used to see a good deal on him at th' start, but we dunnot see him

so often i' these days. He's getten other places to go to. Th' quality mak' a good deal on him."

She paused and sat up, polishing-brush in hand.

"I dunnot wonder as they say yo're han'some," she volunteered.

"Who says so?" coldly.

"Th' men in th' Works an' th' foak as sees yo' i' th' street. Some on 'em says yo're han'somer than her—an' that's sayin' a good bit, yo' know."

"'Her' is Miss Ffrench?"

"Ay. Yo' dunnot dress as foine, an' yo're dark-skinned, but theer's summat noice about yo'. I dunnot wonder as they say yo're han'some."

"Never mind talking about that. Tell me about something else."

The termination of the interview left them on sufficiently good terms.

Janey went home with a story to tell.

"She's crossed th' seas," she said, "an' lived i' furrin parts. She's getten queer ways an' she stares at a body—but I loike her for aw that."

"Been i' furrin parts!" exclaimed Mrs. Briarley.

"Bless us! No wonder th' poor thing's a bit heathenish. Hast tha ivver seed her at chapel, Jane Ann?"

The fact that she had not been seen at chapel awakened grave misgivings as to the possible presence of popery and the "Scarlet Woman," which objectionable female figured largely and in most unpleasant guise in the discourses of Brother Higgins.

"Theer's no knowin' what th' poor lass has been browt up to," said the good matron, "livin' reet under th' Pope's nose an' nivver darin' to say her soul's her own. I nivver had no notion o' them furrin parts mysen. Gie me Lancashire."

But the next week the girl made her visit to the chapel and sat throughout the sermon with her steadfast black eyes fixed upon the Reverend Mr. Higgins. Once, during a moment of inflammatory eloquence, that gentleman, suddenly becoming conscious of her gaze, stopped with a start, and with difficulty regained his equilibrium, though Christian did not flinch at all, or seem to observe his alarm and confusion.

She cultivated Janey with an odd persistence

after this. She asked her questions concerning her life and experiences, and always seemed to find her interesting. Often Janey was conscious of the fact that she stood and looked at her for some time with an air of curiosity.

“ Do you,” she asked her suddenly one day, “ do you believe all that man says to you ? ”

Janey started into a sitting posture, as was her custom when roused in the midst of her labours.

“ Eh ! bless us ! Yes,” she exclaimed. “ Dun-not yo' ? ”

“ No.”

Recollections of the “ Scarlet Woman ” flashed across her young hearer's mind.

“ Art tha a Papist ? ” she gasped.

“ No—not yet.”

“ Art tha,” breathlessly, “ art tha goin' to be ? ”

“ I don't know.”

“ An' tha—tha does na believe what Mester Higgins says ? ”

“ No—not yet.”

“ What does tha believe ? ”

She stared up at the dark young face aghast. It was quite unmoved. The girl's eyes were fixed on space.

"Nothing."

"Wheer—wheer does tha expect to go when tha dees?"

"I don't know," coldly; "very often I don't care."

Janey dropped her brush and forgot to pick it up.

"Why bless thee!" she exclaimed, with some sharpness, and also with the manner of one presenting the only practical solution of a difficulty, "tha'lt go to hell, i' tha does na repent!"

The girl turned her eyes upon her.

"Does it all depend on that?" she demanded.

"Ay, to be sure," testily. "Does na tha know that?"

"Then," slowly, "I shall not go to hell—for I am repenting."

And she turned about and walked away.

CHAPTER IV.

“A SEED SOWN.”

THEIR had been, as it seemed, a lull in the storm. The idlers did not come over from Molton and Dillup as often as they had done at first. The strikes had extended until they were in full blast throughout the country, but Haworth's, so far, had held its own. Haworth himself was regarded as a kind of demi-god. He might have done almost anything he pleased. It was a source of some surprise to his admirers that he chose to do so little and showed no elation. One or two observing outsiders saw that his struggle had left its mark upon him. There were deep lines in his face; he had lost flesh and something of his air of bravado; at times he was almost haggard. As things became quieter he began to take sudden mysterious journeys to London and Manchester and various other towns. Ffrench

did not know why he went; in fact, Ffrench knew very little of him, but that his humours were frequently trying and almost more morose after such absences. He himself had alternately blown hot and cold. Of late the fruit of his efforts had rather the flavour of ashes. He was of even less importance than before in the Works, and he continually heard unpleasant comments and reports outside. As surely as his spirits rose to a jubilant height, some untoward circumstance occurred to dash them.

“I should have thought,” he said fretfully to his daughter, “that as a Broxton man and—and a gentleman, the people would have been with me, but they are not.”

“No,” said Miss Ffrench, “they are not.”

She knew far more than he did himself. She was not in the habit of allowing any sign to escape her. When she took her frequent drives she kept her eyes open to all that happened.

“If they dared, there are a good many of them who would be insolent to me.”

“Why should they not dare?” asked her father, with increased irritation.

“ Because they know I am not afraid of them —because I set them at defiance ; and for another reason.”

The other reason, which she did not state, had nothing to do with their daring. It was the strong one that in the splendour of her beauty she had her greatest power. Ordinary womanhood would scarcely in itself have appealed to the chivalric sentiment of Broxton, Molton, and Dillup ; but Rachel Ffrench, driving slowly through the streets, and past the “ beer-house ” doors, and turning her perfect, unmoved face for criticism to the crowd collected thereat, created a natural diversion. Those who had previously been in a sarcastic mood lapsed into silence ; the most inveterate ’bacco consumers took their pipes out of their mouths, feeling it necessary to suspend all action that they might look after her with a clearer appreciation. They were neither touched nor softened, but they were certainly roused to an active admiration which, after a manner, held them in check.

“ Theer is na another loike her i’ England,” was once remarked rather sullenly by one. “ Not

i' England, let alone Lancashire—an' be dom'd to her,"—this last added with a shade of delicate significance.

But there was one man who saw her with eyes different from the rest. If he had not so seen her, existence would have been another matter. He seemed to live a simple, monotonous life. He held his place in the Works, and did well what he had to do. He was not very thoroughly understood by his fellows, but there existed a vague feeling of respect for him among them. They had become used to his silence and absent-mindedness, and the tasks which seemed to them eccentricities. His responsibilities had increased, but he shouldered them without making any fuss, and worked among the rest just as he had been wont to do when he had been Floxham's right hand in the engine-room. In more select circles he was regarded, somewhat to his distaste, with no inconsiderable interest. He was talked of privately as a young man with a future before him, though the idea of what that future was to be, being gathered from Ffrench, was somewhat indefinite. His own reserve upon the subject

was rather resented, but still was forgiven on the score of eccentricity. For the rest, he lived, as it were, in a dream. The days came and went, but at the close of each there were at least a few hours of happiness.

And yet it was not happiness of a very tangible form. Sometimes, when he left the house and stepped into the cool darkness of the night outside, he found himself stopped for a moment with a sense of bewilderment. Haworth, who had sat talking to his partner and following Rachel Ffrench's figure with devouring eyes, had gained as much as he himself. She had not spoken often, perhaps, and had turned from one to the other with the same glance and tone, but one man left her with anger and misery in his breast, and the other wondered at his own rapture.

"I have done nothing and gained nothing," the young fellow would often say to himself as he sat at the work-table afterward, "but—I am madly happy."

And then he would lie forward with his head upon his folded arms, going over the incidents of

the night again and again—living the seconds over, one by one.

Haworth watched him closely in these days. As he passed him on his way to his work-room, he would look up and follow him with a glance until he turned in at its door. He found ways of hearing of his life outside and of his doings in the Works.

One morning, as he was driving down the road toward the town, he saw in the distance the graceful figure of Mr. Briarley, who was slouching along in the somewhat muddled condition consequent upon the excitement of an agreeably convivial evening at the “Who’d ha’ Thowt it?”

He gave him a critical glance, and the next moment whipped up his horse, uttering an exclamation.

“There’s th’ chap,” he said, “by th’ Lord Harry!”

In a few seconds more he pulled up alongside of him.

“Stop a bit, lad,” he said.

Mr. Briarley hesitated, and then obeyed, with some suddenness. A delicately suggestive recol-

lection of “th' barrels” induced him to do so. He ducked his head with a feeble smile, whose effect was somewhat obscured by a temporary cloud of natural embarrassment. He had not been brought into immediate contact with Haworth since the strikes began.

“Th' same,” he faltered, with illusive cheerfulness,—“th' same to yo', an'—an' mony on 'em.”

Then he paused and stood, holding his hat in his hand, endeavouring painfully to preserve the smile in all its pristine beauty of expression.

Haworth leaned forward in his gig.

“ You're a nice chap,” he said. “ You're a nice chap.”

A general vague condition of mind betrayed Mr. Briarley into the momentary weakness of receiving this compliment literally. He brightened perceptibly, and his countenance became suffused with the roseate blush of manly modesty.

“ My best days is ower,” he replied. “ I've been misforchnit, Mester—but theer wur a toime as th' opposite sect ha' said th' same—though that theer's a thing,” reflecting deeply and

shaking his head, “as I nivver remoind Sararann on.”

The next moment he fell back in some trepidation. Haworth looked down at him coolly.

“ You’re a pretty chap,” he said, “ goin’ on th’ strike an’ leaving your wife and children to starve at home, while you lay in your beer and make an ass of yourself.”

“ Eh ! ” exclaimed Mr. Briarley.

“ And make an ass of yourself,” repeated Haworth, unmovedly. “ You’d better be drawin’ your wages, my lad.”

Mr. Briarley’s expression changed. From bewilderment he passed into comparative gloom.

“ It is na drawin’ em I’ve getten owt agen,” he remarked. “ It is na drawin’ ‘em. It’s earnin’ ‘em,—an’ ha’in’ ‘em took away an’—an’ spent i’ luxuries—berryin’-clubs an’ th’ loike. Brass as ud buy th’ nessycerries.”

“ If we’d left you alone,” said Haworth, “ where would your wife and children be now, you scoundrel ? Who’s fed ‘em and clothed ‘em while you’ve been on th’ spree ? Jem Haworth, blast you !—Jem Haworth.”

He put his hand in his pocket, and, drawing forth a few jingling silver coins, tossed them to him.

“Take these,” he said, “an’ go an’ spend ‘em on th’ ‘nessycerries,’ as you call ‘em. You’ll do it, I know well enow. You’ll be in a worse box than you are now, before long. We’ll have done with you chaps when Murdoch’s finished the job he’s got on hand.”

“What’s that?” faltered Briarley. “I ha’ na heerd on it?”

Haworth laughed and picked up his whip and reins.

“Ask him,” he answered. “He can tell you better than I can. He’s at work on a thing that’ll set the masters a good bit freer than they are now. That’s all I know. There won’t be any need o’ so many o’ you lads. You’ll have to make your brass out of a new trade.”

He bent a little to settle a strap.

“Go and tell the rest on ‘em,” he said. “You’ll do it when you’re drunk enow, I dare say.”

Briarley fumbled with his coins. His air became speculative.

“What are you thinkin’ on?” demanded Haworth. “It’s a bad look-out, isn’t it?”

Mr. Briarley drew a step nearer the gig’s side. He appeared somewhat pale, and spoke in a whisper. Muddled as he was, he had an idea or so left.

“It’ll be a bad look-out for him,” he said. “Bless yo’! They’d tear him to pieces. They’re in th’ humour for it. They’ve been carryin’ a grudge so long they’re ready fur owt. They’ve nivver thowt mich o’ him, though, but start ’em on that an’ they wouldn’t leave a shred o’ it together—nor a shred o’ him eyther, if they got the chance.”

Haworth laughed again.

“Wouldn’t they?” he said. “Let ’em try. He’d have plenty to stand by him. Th’ masters are on his side, my lad.”

He touched his horse, and it began to move. Suddenly he checked it and looked back, speaking again.

“Keep it to yourself, then,” he said, “if there’s danger, and keep my name out of it, by George, if you want to be safe!”

Just as he drove up to the gates of the yard Murdoch passed him and entered them. Until then—since he had left Briarley—he had not spoken. He had driven rapidly on his way with a grim, steady face. As Murdoch went by he got down from his gig, and went to the horse's head. He stood close to it, knotting the reins.

“Nor of him either,” he said. “Nor of him either, by —”

CHAPTER V.

“A CLIMAX.”

THE same night Mr. Briarley came home in a condition more muddled and dishevelled than usual. He looked as if he had been hustled about and somewhat unceremoniously treated. He had lost his hat, and was tremulous and excited. He came in without the trifling ceremony of opening the door. In fact, he fell up against it and ran in, and making an erratic dive at a chair, sat down. Granny Dixon, who had been dozing in her usual seat, was roused by the concussion and wakened and sat up, glaring excitedly.

“He’s been at it agen !” she shouted. “At it agen ! He’ll nivver ha’ none o’ my brass to mak’ way wi’. He’s been at——”

Mrs. Briarley turned upon her.

“Keep thy mouth shut !” she said.

The command was effective in one sense, though not in another. Mrs. Dixon stopped in the midst of the word “at” with her mouth wide open, and so sat for some seconds, with the aspect of an ancient beldame ordinarily going by machinery and suddenly having had her works stopped.

She would probably have presented this appearance for the remainder of the evening if Mrs. Briarley had not addressed her again.

“Shut thy mouth!” she said.

The works were set temporarily in motion, and her countenance slowly resumed its natural lines. She appeared to settle down all over and sink and become smaller, though, as she crouched nearer the fire, she had rather an evil look, which seemed to take its red glow into her confidence and secretly rage at it.

“What's tha been doin'?” Mrs. Briarley demanded of her better half. “Out wi' it!”

Mr. Briarley had already fallen into his favourite position. He had placed an elbow upon each knee and carefully supported his dishevelled head upon his hands. He had also already

begun to shed tears, which dropped and made disproportionately large circles upon the pipe-clayed floor.

“I’m a misforchnit chap,” he said. “I’m a misforchnit chap, Sararan, as nivver had no luck.”

“What’s tha been doin’?” repeated Mrs. Briarley, with even greater sharpness than before; “out wi’ it.”

“Nay,” said Mr. Briarley, “that theer’s what I’ve getten mysen i’ trouble wi’. I wunnot do it agen.”

“Theer’s summat i’ beer,” he proceeded, mournfully, “as goes agen a man. He towd me not to say nowt an’ I did na mean to, but,” with fresh pathos, “theer’s summat i’ beer as winds—as winds a chap up. I’m not mich o’ th’ speakin’ loine, Sararan, but afore I knowed it, I wur a-makin’ a speech—an’ when I bethowt me an’ wanted to set down—they wur bound to mak’ me—go on to th’ eend—an’ when I would na—theer wur a good bit—o’ public opinion igspressed—an’ I did na stop—to bid ‘em good-neet. Theer wur too much agoin’ on.”

“ What wur it aw about ? ” asked Mrs. Briarley.

But Mr. Briarley’s voice had been gradually becoming lower and lower, and his words more incoherent. He was sinking into slumber. When she repeated her question, he awakened with a violent start.

“ I’m a misforchnit chap,” he murmured, “ an I dunnot know. ’Scaped me, Sararann—owin’ to misforchins.”

“ Eh ! ” remarked Mrs. Briarley, regarding him with connubial irony, “ but tha art a graidely foo’ ! I’d gie summat to see a graidelier un ! ”

But he was so far gone by this time that there was no prospect of a clear solution of the cause of his excitement. And so she turned to Granny Dixon.

“ It’s toime fur thee to be i’ bed,” she shouted. Granny Dixon gave a sharp, stealthy move round, and a sharp, stealthy glance up at her.

“ I—dunnot want to go,” she quavered shrilly.

“ Ay, but tha does,” was the answer. “ An’ tha’rt goin’ too. Get up, Missus.”

And singularly enough, Mrs. Dixon fumbled until she found her stick, and gathering herself

up and leaning upon it, made her rambling way out of the room, carrying her evil look with her.

“Bless us!” Mrs. Briarley had said in confidence to a neighbour a few days before. “I wur nivver more feart i’ my life than when I’d done it, an’ th’ owd besom set theer wi’ her cap o’ one side an’ her breath gone. I did na know but I’d put an eend to her. I nivver should ha’ touched her i’ th’ world if I had na been that theer upset as I did na know what I wur doin’. I thowt she’d be up an’ out i’ the street as soon as she’d getten her breath an’, happen, ca’ on th’ porlice. An’ to think it’s been th’ settlin’ on her! It feart me to see it at th’ first, but I wur na goin’ to lose th’ chance, an’ the next day I give it to her up an’ down—tremblin’ i’ my shoes aw th’ toime. I says, ‘Tha may leave thy brass to who tha loikes, but tha’lt behave thysen while tha stays here or Sararann Brarley’ll see about it. So mak’ up thy moind.’ An’ I’ve nivver had a bit o’ trouble wi’ her fro’ then till now. She conna bide th’ sight o’ me, but she dare na go agen me fur her life.”

The next day Haworth went away upon one of his mysterious journeys.

“To Leeds or Manchester, or perhaps London,” said Ffrench. “I don't know where.”

The day after was Saturday, and in the afternoon Jane Briarley presented herself to Mrs. Murdoch at an early hour, and evidently with something on her mind.

“I mun get through wi' th' cleanin' an' go whoam soon,” she said. “Th' stroikers is over fro' Molton an' Dillup agen. Theer's summat up among 'em.”

“We dunnot know nowt about it,” she answered, when further questioned. “We on'y know they're here an' i' a ill way about summat they've fun out. Feyther, he's aw upset, but he dare na nowt fur fear o' the Union. Mother thinks they've gotten summat agen Ffrench.”

“Does Mr. Ffrench know that?” Mrs. Murdoch asked.

“He'll know it soon enow, if he does na,” drily. “They'll noan stand back at tellin' him if they're i' the humour—but he's loiker to know

than not. He's too feart on 'em not to be on th' watch."

It was plain enough before many hours had passed that some disturbance was on foot. The strikers gathered about the streets in groups, or lounged here and there sullenly. They were a worse-looking lot than they had been in the outset. Idleness and ill-feeling and dissipation had left their marks. Clothes were shabbier, faces more brutal, and habits plainly more vicious.

At one o'clock Mr. Ffrench disappeared from his room at the bank. No one knew exactly how or when. All the morning he had spent in vacillating between his desk and a window looking into the street. There was a rumour among the clerks that he had been seen vanishing through a side door leading into a deserted little back street.

An hour later he appeared in the parlour in which his daughter sat. He was hot and flurried and out of breath.

“Those scoundrels are in the town again,” he said. “And there is no knowing what they are

up to. It was an insane thing for Haworth to go away at such a time. By night there will be an uproar.”

“ If there is an uproar,” said Miss Ffrench, “ they will come here. They know they can do nothing at the Works. He is always ready for them there—and they are angrier with you than they are with him.”

“ There is no reason why they should be,” Ffrench protested. “ *I* took no measures against them, Heaven knows.”

“ I think,” returned Rachel, “ that is the reason. You have been afraid of them.”

He coloured to the roots of his hair.

“ You are saying a deuced unpleasant thing, my dear,” he broke forth.

“ It is true,” she answered. “ What would be the use in *not* saying it ? ”

He had no reply to make. The trouble was that he never had a reply to make to these deadly simple statements of hers.

He began to walk up and down the room.

“ The people we invited to dine with us,” she said, “ will not come. They will hear what

is going on and will be afraid. It is very stupid.”

“I wonder,” he faltered, “if Murdoch will fail us. He never did before.”

“No,” she answered. “*He* will not stay away.”

The afternoon dragged away its unpleasant length. As it passed Ffrench found in every hour fresh cause for nervousness and excitement. The servant, who had been out, brought disagreeable enough tidings. The small police force of the town had its hands full in attending to its business of keeping order.

“If we had had time to send to Manchester for some assistance,” said Mr. Ffrench.

“That would have been reason enough for being attacked,” said Rachel. “It would have shown them that we felt we needed protection.”

“We *may* need it before all is quiet again,” retorted her father.

“We *may*,” she answered, “or we *may not*.”

By night several arrests had been made, and there was a good deal of disorder in the town. A goodly quantity of beer had been drunk, and

there had been a friendly fight or so between the strikers themselves.

Rachel left her father in the drawing-room and went upstairs to prepare for dinner. When she returned an hour afterward he turned to her with an impatient start.

“ Why did you dress *yourself* in that manner ? ” he exclaimed. “ You said *yourself* our guests would not come.”

“ It occurred to me,” she answered, “ that we might have visitors after all.”

But it was as she had prophesied,—the guests they had expected did not come. They were discreet and well-regulated elderly people who had lived long in the manufacturing districts, and had passed through little unpleasantnesses before. They knew that under existing circumstances it would be wiser to remain at home than to run the risk of exposing themselves to spasmodic criticism and its results.

But they had visitors.

The dinner hour passed and they were still alone. Even Murdoch had not come. A dead silence reigned in the room. Ffrench was trying

to read and not succeeding very well. Miss Ffrench stood by the window looking out. It was a clear night and the moon was at full; it was easy to see far up the road, upon whose whiteness the trees cast black shadows. She was looking up this road toward the town. She had been watching it steadily for some time. Once her father had turned to her restlessly, saying—

“Why do you stand there? You—you might be expecting something to happen.”

She did not make any reply and still retained her position. But about half an hour afterward she turned suddenly, and spoke in a low, clear tone.

“If you are afraid, you had better go away,” she said. “They are coming.”

It was evident that at least she felt no alarm, though there was a thrill of excitement in her voice. Mr. Ffrench sprang up from his seat.

“They are coming!” he echoed. “Good God! What do you mean?”

It was not necessary that she should enter into an explanation. A clamour of voices in the road told its own story. There were shouts and

riotous cries which, in a moment more, were no longer outside the gates, but within them. An uproarious crowd of men and boys poured into the garden, trampling the lawn and flower-beds beneath their feet as they rushed and stumbled over them.

“ Wheer is he ?” they shouted. “ Bring the chap out, an' let's tak' a look at him. Bring him out !”

Ffrench moved toward the door of the room, and then, checked by some recollection, turned back again.

“ Good Heaven !” he said, “ they are at their worst, and here we are utterly alone. Why did Haworth go away ? Why——”

His daughter interrupted him.

“ There is no use in your staying,” she said. “ It will do no good. You may go if you like. There is the back way. None of them are near it.”

“ I—I can't leave you here,” he stammered. “ Haworth was mad ! Why, in Heaven's name——”

“ There is no use asking why again,” she

replied. “I cannot tell you. I think you had better go.”

Her icy coldness would have been a pretty hard thing to bear if he had been less terror-stricken; but he saw that the hand with which she held the window-curtain was shaking.

He did not know, however, that it was not shaking with fear, but with the power of excitement which stirred her.

It is scarcely possible that he would have left her, notwithstanding his panic, though, for a second, it nearly seemed that he had so far lost self-control as to be wavering; but as he stood, pale and breathless, there arose a fresh yell.

“Wheer is he? Bring him out! Murdoch, th’ ‘Merican chap! We’re coom to see him!”

“What’s that?” he asked. “Who is it they want?”

“Murdoch! Murdoch!” was shouted again. “Let’s ha’ a word wi’ Murdoch! We lads ha’ summat to say to him.”

“It is not me they want,” he said. “It is Murdoch. It is not me at all.”

She dashed the window-curtain aside and

turned on him. He was stunned by the mere sight of her face. Every drop of blood seemed driven from it.

“ You are a coward ! ” she cried, panting. “ A coward ! It is a relief to you ! ”

He stood staring at her.

“ A — a relief ! ” he stammered. “ I — don't understand you. What is the matter ? ”

She had recovered herself almost before she had begun to speak. It was over in a second. He had not had time to realise the situation before she was moving toward the window.

“ They shall see *me*, ” she said. “ Let us see what they will have to say to *me*. ”

He would have stopped her, but she did not pay the slightest attention to his exclamation. The window was a French one, opening upon a terrace. She flung it backward, and stepped out and stood before the rioters.

And for a second there was not a sound.

They had been expecting to see a man,— perhaps Ffrench, perhaps Murdoch, perhaps even a representative of the small police force, looking as if he felt himself one too many in the gathering,

or not quite enough,—and here was simply a tall young woman in a dazzling dress of some rich white stuff, and with something sparkling upon her hands and arms and in her high-dressed blonde hair.

The moonlight struck full upon her, and she stood in it serenely and bore unmoved the stupid stare of all their eyes. It was she who spoke first, and then they knew her, and the spell which held them dumb was broken.

“What do you want?” she demanded. “I should like to hear.”

Then they began to shout again.

“We want Murdoch!” they said. “We ha’ summat to say to him.”

“He is not here,” she said. “He has not been here.”

“That’s a lee,” remarked a gentleman on the outskirts of the crowd. “A dom’d un.”

She made no answer, and, singularly enough, nobody laughed.

“Why,” she said next, “do you want him?”

“We want to hear about that contrapshun o’ his as is goin’ to mak’ th’ mesters indypendent.

He knows what we want him fur. We've just been to his house and brokken th' winders. He's getten wind on us comin', an' he made off wi' th' machine. He'll be here afore along if he is na here now, an' we're bound to see him."

"He'll be up to see thee," put in the gentleman on the outskirts, "an' I dunnot blame him. I'm glad I coom mysen. Tha's worth th' trip—an' I'm a Dillup chap, moind yo'."

She stood quite still as before and let them look at her, to see what effect the words had produced. It seemed as if they had produced none.

"If you have come to see him," she said, after a few seconds, "you may go away again. He is not here. I know where he is, and you cannot reach him. If there has not been some blunder, he is far enough away."

She told the lie without flinching in the least, and with a clever coolness which led her to think in a flash beforehand even of the clause which would save her dignity if he should chance to come in the midst of her words.

"If you want to break windows," she went on,

“break them here. They can be replaced afterward, and there is no one here to interfere with you. If you would like to vent your anger upon a woman, vent it upon *me*. *I am not afraid of you. Look at me!*”

She took half a step forward and presented herself to them—motionless. Not a fellow among them but felt that she would not have stirred if they had rushed upon her bodily. The effect of her supreme beauty, and the cold defiance which had in it a touch of delicate insolence, was indescribable. This was not in accordance with their ideas of women of her class ; they were used to seeing them discreetly keeping themselves in the shade in time of disorder. Here was one—“one o’ the nobs,” as they said—who flung their threats to the wind and scorned them.

What they would have done when they recovered themselves is uncertain. The scale might have turned either way ; but just in the intervening moment which would have decided it there arose a tumult in their midst. A man pushed his way with mad haste through the crowd and sprang upon the terrace at her side,

amid yells and hoots from those who had guessed who he was.

An instant later they all knew him, though his dress was disordered, his head was bare, and his whole face and figure seemed altered by his excitement.

“ Dom him ! ” they yelled. “ Theer he is, by —— ! ”

“ I towd thee he'd coom,” shouted the cynic.
“ He did na get th' tellygraph, tha sees.”

He turned on them, panting and white with rage.

“ You devils ! ” he cried. “ You here too ! Haven't you done enough ? Isn't bullying and frightening two women enough for you, that you must come here ? ”

“ That's reet,” commented the cynic. “ Stond up fur th' young woman, Murdoch. I'd do it mysen i' I wur o' that soide. Allus stond up fur th' sect ! ”

Murdoch spoke to Rachel Ffrench.

“ You must go in,” he said. “ There is no knowing what they will do.”

“ I shall stay here,” she answered.

She made an impatient gesture. She was shuddering from head to foot.

“Don’t look at or speak to me,” she said.

“You—you make me a coward.”

“They will stand at nothing,” he protested.

“I will not turn my back upon them,” she said.

“Let them do their worst.”

He turned to the crowd again. Her life itself was in danger, and he knew he could not move her. He was shuddering himself.

“Who is your leader?” he said to the men.

“I suppose you have one.”

The man known as Foxy Gibbs responded to the cries of his name by pushing his way to the front. He was a big, resolute, hulking scamp who had never been known to do an honest day’s work, and who was yet always in funds and at liberty to make incendiary speeches where beer and tobacco were plentiful.

“What do you want of me?” demanded Murdoch. “Speak out.”

The fellow was ready enough with his words, and forcible too.

“We’ve heerd tell o’ summat goin’ on we’re

not goin' to stond,” he said. “ We've heerd tell o' a chap 'at's contrivin' summat to do away wi' them as does th' work now an' mak's theer bread by it. We've heerd as the mesters is proidin' theersens on it an' laughin' in theer sleeves. We've heerd tell as theer's a chap makkin' what'll eend i' mischief—an' yo're the chap.”

“ Who told you ?”

“ Nivver moind who. A foo' let it out, an' we wur na in th' humour to let it pass. We're goin' to sift th' thing to th' bottom. Yo're th' chap as was nam't. What ha' yo' getten to say ?”

“ Just one thing,” he answered. “ It's a lie from first to last—an accursed lie !”

“ Lee or not, we're goin' to smash th' thing, whatever it is. We're noan particular about th' lee. We'll mak' th' thing safe first, an' then settle about the lee.”

Murdoch thrust his hands in his pockets and eyed them with his first approach at his usual *sang-froid*.

“ It's where you won't find it,” he said. “ I've made sure of that.”

It was a mad speech to have made, but he had

lost self-control and balance. He was too terribly conscious of Rachel Ffrench's perilous nearness to be in the mood to weigh his words. He saw his mistake in a second. There was a shout and a surging movement of the mob toward him, and Rachel Ffrench, with an indescribable swiftness, had thrown herself before him and was struck by a stone which came whizzing through the air.

She staggered under the stroke but stood upright in a breath's space.

“My God!” Murdoch cried out. “They have struck you! They have struck you!”

He was half mad with his anguish and horror. The sight of the little stream of blood which trickled from her temple turned him sick with rage.

“You devils!” he raved, “do you see what you have done?”

But the play was over. Before he had finished his outcry there was a shout of “th' coppers! th' coppers!” and a rush and skurry and tumble of undignified retreat. The police force with a band of anti-strikers behind them had appeared upon the scene in the full glory of the uniform of

the corporation, and such was the result of habit and the majesty of the law that those who were not taken into custody incontinently took to their heels and scattered in every direction, uttering curses loud and deep, since they were not yet prepared to resist an attack more formally.

In half an hour the trampled grass and flower-beds and broken shrubs were the only signs of the tumult. Mr. Ffrench was walking up and down the dreary room in as nervous a condition as ever.

“Good heavens, Rachel!” he said, “you must have been mad—mad.”

She had persistently refused to lie down, and sat in an easy-chair, looking rather colourless and languid. When they were left alone, Murdoch came and stood near her. He was paler than she, and haggard and worn. Before she knew what he was about to do he fell upon his knees, and covered her hands with kisses.

“If any harm had come to you,” he cried—
“if any harm had come to you——”

She tried to drag her hands away with an angry face, but he clung to them. And then quite suddenly all her resistance ceased and her eyes fixed themselves upon him as if with a kind of dread.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I AM NOT READY FOR IT YET.”

IN expectation of something very serious happening, the constabulary reinforced itself the day following and assumed a more imposing aspect, and was prepared to be very severe indeed upon all shortcomings or symptoms of approaching disorder. But somewhat to its private disappointment an unlooked - for quiet prevailed — an almost suspicious quiet indeed. There were rumours that a secret meeting had been held by the strikers the night before, and the result of it was that in the morning there appeared to have been a sudden dispersing, and only those remained behind who were unavoidably detained by the rather unfortunate circumstance of their having before them the prospect of spending a few weeks in the comparative retirement of the county jail. These gentlemen

peremptorily refused to give any definite explanation of their eccentricities of conduct of the night before and were altogether very unsatisfactory indeed, one of them even going so far, under the influence of temporary excitement, as to be guilty of the indiscretion of announcing his intention of “doin’ fur” one or two enemies of his cause when his term expired, on account of which amiable statement three months were added to said term upon the spot.

It was Janey Briarley who had given Murdoch his warning upon the night of the riot. Just before he had left the Works she had come into the yard, saying she had a message for Haworth, and on being told that he was away, had asked for Murdoch.

“He’ll do if I canna see th’ mester,” she remarked.

But when she reached Murdoch’s room she stepped across the threshold and shut the door cautiously.

“Con anybody hear?” she demanded, with an uneasy glance round.

“No,” he answered.

“Then cut thy stick as fast as tha can, an' get thee whoam an' hoid away that thing tha'rt makkin'. Th' stroikers is after it. Nivver moind how I fun' out. Cut an' run. I axt fur Haworth to throw 'em off th' scent. I knowed he wurna here. Haste thee!”

Her manifest alarm convinced him that there was foundation enough for her errand, and that she had run some risk in venturing it.

“Thank you,” he said. “You may have saved me a great deal. Let us go out quietly as if nothing was in hand. Come along.”

And so they went, he talking loud as they passed through the gates, and as it was already dusk he was out on the Broxton road in less than half an hour, and when he returned the mob had been to his mother's house and broken a few windows in their rage at his having escaped them, and had gone off shouting that they would go to Ffrench's.

“He'll be fun theer,” some one said—possibly the cynic. “Th' young woman is a sweetheart o' his, an' yo'll be loike to hear o' th' cat wheer th' cream stonds.”

His mother met him on the threshold with the news of the outbreak and the direction it had taken. A few brief sentences told him all, and at the end of them he left the house at once.

"I am going there to show myself to them," he said. "They will not return here. You are safe enough now. The worst is over here, but there is no knowing what they may do there when they find themselves baffled."

It was after midnight when he came back, and then it was Christian who opened the door for him.

He came into the little dark passage with a slow, unsteady step. For a second he did not seem to see her at all. His face was white, his eyes were shining, and his brow was slightly knit in lines, which might have meant intense pain.

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

It was as if her voice wakened him from a trance. He looked at her for the first time.

"Hurt!" he echoed. "No—not hurt."

He went into the sitting-room and she followed him. The narrow horse-hair sofa, upon which his

father had lain so often, stood in its old place. He threw himself full length upon it, and lay looking straight before him.

“ Are you—are you sure you are not hurt ? ” she faltered.

He echoed her words again.

“ Am I sure I am not hurt ? ” he repeated, dreamily. “ Yes, I am sure of it.”

And then he turned slightly toward her, and she saw that the look his face wore was not one of pain, but of strange rapture.

“ I am not hurt,” he said, quite slowly. “ I am madly happy.”

Then she understood. She was as ignorant of many things as she was bitterly wise in others, but she had not been blind, and she understood quite clearly. She sat down upon a low seat, from which she could see him, her hands clasped on her knee.

“ I knew,” she said at last, “ that it would come some day—I *knew* that it would.”

“ Did you ? ” he answered, in the same dreamy way. “ I did not. I did not even hope for it. I do not comprehend it even now.”

"I do," she returned, "quite well."

He scarcely seemed to hear her.

"I hoped for nothing," he said. "And now—I am madly happy."

There was nothing more for her to say. She had a fancy that perhaps in the morning he would have forgotten that he had spoken. It seemed as if even yet he was hardly conscious of her presence. But before she went away she asked him a question.

"Where did you put the model?"

He gave a feverish start.

"Where?" And then falling back into his previous manner—"I took it to the chapel yard. I knew they would not go there. There was space enough behind the—the head-stone and the old wall for it to stand, and the grass grew long and thick. I left it there."

"It was a safe place," she answered. "When shall you bring it back?"

He sighed impatiently.

"Not yet," he said. "Not just yet. Let it stay there a while. I am not—ready for it. Let it stay."

CHAPTER VII.

“SETTLING AN ACCOUNT.”

IT was not until the week following that Haworth returned, and then he came without having given any previous warning of his intention. Ffrench, sitting in his office in a rather dejected mood one morning, was startled by his entering with even less than his usual small ceremony.

“My dear Haworth,” he exclaimed. “Is it possible?”

His first intention had been to hold out his hand, but he did not do so. In fact he sat down again a little suddenly and uneasily. Haworth sat down too, confronting him squarely.

“What have you been up to?” he demanded.
“What is this row about?”

“About!” echoed Ffrench. “It's the most extraordinary combination of nonsense and mis-

understanding I ever heard of in my life. How it arose there is no knowing. The fellows are mad !”

“Ay,” angrily, “mad enow, but you can’t stop ’em now they’ve got agate. It’s a devilish look-out for us. I’ve heard it all over the country, and the more you say again’ it the worse it is. They’re set on it all through Lancashire that there’s a plot again’ ‘em, and they’re fur fettlin’ it their own fashion.”

“You—you don’t think it will be worse for us ?” his partner suggested weakly. “It struck me that—in the end—it mightn’t be a bad thing—that it would change the direction of their mood.”

“Wait until the end comes. It’s not here yet. Tell me how it happened.”

Upon the whole Mr. Ffrench made a good story of it. He depicted the anxieties and dangers of the occasion very graphically. He had lost a good deal of his enthusiasm on the subject of the uncultivated virtues and sturdy determination of the manufacturing labouring classes, and he was always fluent, as has been before mentioned. He was very fluent now, and especially

so in describing the incident of his daughter's presenting herself to the mob, and the result of her daring.

“ She might have lost her life,” he said at one point. “ It was an insane thing to have done—an insane thing. She surprised them at first, but she could not hold them in check after Murdoch came. She will bear the mark of the stone flung for many a day.”

“ They threw a stone, blast 'em, did they ? ” said Haworth, setting his teeth.

“ Yes ; but not at her. Perhaps they would hardly have dared that after all. It was thrown at Murdoch.”

“ And he stepped out of the way ? ”

“ Oh, no. He did not see the man raise his arm, but she did, and was too much alarmed to reflect, I suppose—and—in fact threw herself before him.”

He moved back disturbedly the next instant. Haworth burst forth with a string of oaths. The veins stood out like cords on his forehead ; he ground his teeth. When the outbreak was over he asked an embarrassing question.

“Where were you?”

“I?” with some uncertainty of tone. “I—had not gone out. I—I did not wish to infuriate them. It seemed to me that—that—that a great deal depended upon their not being infuriated.”

“Ay,” said Haworth, “a good deal.”

He asked a good many questions Ffrench did not quite understand. He seemed in a questioning humour, and went over the ground step by step. He asked what the mob had said and done, and even how they had looked.

“It’s a bad look-out for Murdoch,” he said. “They’ll have a spite again’ him. They’re lyin’ quiet a bit now, because it’s safest, but they’ll carry their spite.”

At Ffrench’s invitation he went up to the house with him to dinner. As they passed into the grounds, Murdoch passed out. He was walking quickly, and scarcely seemed to see them until Ffrench spoke.

“It’s a queer time of day for him to be here,” said Haworth when he was gone.

Ffrench’s reply held a touch of embarrassment.

“He is not usually here so early,” he said.

“ He has probably been doing some little errand for Rachel.”

The truth was that he had been with her for an hour, and that, on seeing Haworth coming down the road with her father, she had sent him away.

“ I want to be alone when he comes,” she had said.

And when Murdoch said, “ Why ?” she had answered, “ Because it will be easier.”

When they came in, she was sitting with the right side of her face toward them. They could see nothing of the mark upon her left temple. It was not a large mark, and not a disfiguring one, but there were traces of its presence in her pallor. She did not rise, and would have kept this side of her face out of view, but Haworth came and took his seat before her. It would not have been easy for her to move or change her position—and he looked directly at the significant little bruise. His glance turned upon it again and again as he talked to her or her father ; if it wandered off it came back and rested there. During dinner she felt that, place herself as she would, in a few seconds she would be conscious

again that he had baffled her. For the first time in his experience it was he who had the advantage.

But when they returned to the parlour she held herself in check. She placed herself opposite to him, and turned her face toward him, and let him look without flinching. It was as if suddenly she wished that he should see, and had a secret defiant reason for the wish. It seemed a long evening, but she did not lose an inch of ground after this. When he was going away she rose and stood before him. Her father had gone to the other end of the room, and was fussing unnecessarily over some memoranda. As they waited together, Haworth took his last look at the mark upon her temple.

“If it had been *me* you wore it for,” he said, “I’d have had my hands on the throat of the chap that did it before now. It *wasn’t* me, but I’ll find him and pay him for it yet, by George!”

She had no time to answer him. Her father came toward them with the papers in his hands. Haworth listened to his wordy explanation without moving a line of his face. He did not hear

it, and Ffrench was dimly conscious of the fact.

About half an hour after, the door of the bar-parlour of the “Who'd ha' Thowt it?” was flung open.

“Where's Briarley?” a voice demanded.
“Send him out here. I want him—Haworth.”

Mr. Briarley arose in even more than his usual trepidation. He looked from side to side, quaking.

“Wheer is he?” he asked.

Haworth stood on the threshold.

“Here,” he answered. “Come out!”

Mr. Briarley obeyed. At the door Haworth collared him and led him down the sanded passage and into the road outside.

A few yards from the house there was a pump. He piloted him to it and set him against it, and began to swear at him fluently.

“You blasted scoundrel!” he said. “You let it out, did you?”

Mr. Briarley was covered with confusion as with a garment.

“I’m a misforchnit chap as is allus i’ trouble,” he said. “Theer’s summat i’ ivvery thin’ I lay hond on as seems to go agen me. I dunnot see how it is. Happen theer’s summat i’ me a-bein’ a dom’d foo,’ or happen it’s nowt but misforchin. Sararann——”

Haworth stopped him by swearing again, something more sulphureously than before,—so sulphureously, indeed, that Mr. Briarley listened with eyes distended and mouth agape.

“Let’s hear what you know about th’ thing,” Haworth ended.

Mr. Briarley shut his mouth. He would have kept it shut if he had dared.

“I dunnot know nowt,” he answered, with patient mendacity. “I wur na wi’ ‘em.”

“You know plenty,” said Haworth. “Out with it, if you don’t want to get yourself into trouble. Who was the chap that threw the stone ?”

“I—I dunnot know.”

“If you don’t tell me,” said Haworth, through his clenched teeth, “it’ll be worse for you. It was you I let the truth slip to ; you were the first

chap that heard it, and you were the first chap that started the row and egged it on.”

“ I did na egg it on,” protested Mr. Briarley. “ It did na need no eggin’ on. They pounced on it loike cats on a bird. I did na mean to tell ‘em owt about it. I’m a dom’d foo’. I’m th’ dom’dest foo’ fro’ here to Dillup.”

“ Ay,” said Haworth, sardonically, “ that’s like enow. Who was the chap that threw the stone ?”

He returned to the charge so swiftly and with such fell determination that Mr. Briarley began fairly to whimper.

“ I dare na tell,” he said. “ They’d mak’ quick work o’ me if they fun me out.”

“ Who was it ?” persisted Haworth. “ They’ll make quicker work of you at the ‘ Old Bailey,’ if you don’t.”

Mr. Briarley turned his disreputable, battered cap round and round in his nervous hands. He was mortally afraid of Haworth.

“ A man’s getten to think o’ his family,” he argued. “ If he dunnot think o’ hissen, he mun think o’ his family. I’ve getten a mortal big

un—twelve on 'em an' Sararann, as ud be left on th' world if owt wur to happen—twelve on 'em as ud be left wi'out no one to stand by 'em an' pervide for 'em. Theer's nowt a fam'ly misses so mich as th' head. The head should na run no risks. It's th' head's duty to tak' care o' hissen an' keep o' th' safe soide."

“Who threw the stone ?” said Haworth.

Mr. Briarley gave him one cowed glance and broke down.

“It wur Tummas Reddy,” he burst forth helplessly. “Lord ha' mercy on me !”

“Where is he ?”

“He's i' theer,” jerking his cap toward the bar-room, “an' I'm i' th' worst mess I ivver wur i' my loife. I'm fettlet now, by the Lord Harry !”

“Which way does he go home ?”

“Straight along the road here, if I *mun* get up to my neck—an’—an’ be dom’d to him!—if I may tak’ th’ liberty.”

“Settle yourself to stand here till he comes out, and then tell me which is he.”

“Eh !”

“When he comes out say the word, and stay

here till he does. I've got a bit o' summat to settle with him."

"Will ta—will ta promise tha will na let out who did it? If tha does, th' buryin' club'll ha' brass to pay out afore a week's over."

"You're safe enow," Haworth answered, "if you'll keep your mouth shut. They'll hear nowt from me."

A gleam of hope—a faint one—illumined Mr. Briarley's countenance.

"I would na ha' no objections to tha settlin' wi' him," he said. "I ha' not nowt agen that. He's a chap as I am na fond on, and he's getten more cheek than belongs to him. I'd ha' settled wi' him mysen if I had na been a fam'ly man. Ha'in' a fam'ly to think on howds a man back. Theer—I hear 'em comin' now. Would yo'," in some hurry, "ha' owt agen me gettin' behind th' pump ?"

"Get behind it," answered Haworth, "and be damned to you!"

He got behind it with alacrity, and, as it was not a large pump, was driven by necessity to narrowing himself to its compass, as it were, and

taking up very little room. Haworth himself drew back somewhat, and yet kept within hearing.

Four or five men came out and went their different ways, and Mr. Briarley made no sign; but as the sixth, a powerful, clumsy fellow, passed, he uttered a cautious “Theer he is ! ”

Haworth did not stir. It was a dark, cloudy night, and he was far enough from the road to be safe from discovery. The man went on at a leisurely pace.

Mr. Briarley reappeared, breathing shortly.

“I mun go whoam,” he said. “Sararann——” and scarcely waiting for Haworth’s signal of dismissal, he departed as if he had been shot from a string-bow, and fled forth into the shadows.

Mr. Reddy went at a leisurely pace, as has been before observed. He usually went at a leisurely pace when he was on his way home. He was “a bad lot” altogether, and his home was a squalid place, and his wife more frequently than not had a black eye or a bruised face, and was haggard with hunger, and full of miserable complaints and reproaches. Consequently he did

not approach the scene of his domestic joys with any haste.

He was in a worse humour than usual to-night from various causes, the chief one, perhaps, being that he had only had enough spirituous liquor to make him savage, and to cause him to enliven his way with blasphemy.

Suddenly, however, at the corner of a lane which crossed the road he paused. He heard behind him the sound of heavy feet nearing him with a quick tramp, which somehow presented to his mind the idea of a purpose, and for some reason, not exactly clear to himself, he turned about and waited.

“ Who’s that theer ? ” he asked.

“ It’s me,” he was answered. “ Stand up and take thy thrashin’, my lad.”

The next instant he was struggling in the darkness with an assailant, and the air was hot with oaths, and they were writhing together and panting, and striking blinding blows. Sometime it was one man and then the other who was uppermost, but at last it was Haworth, and he had his man in his grasp.

“This is because you hit the wrong mark, my lad,” he said. “Because luck went agen you, and because it’s gone agen me.”

When he had done Mr. Reddy lay beaten into seeming insensibility. He had sworn and gnashed his teeth and beaten back in vain.

“Who is it, by —— ?” he panted. “Who is it ?”

“It’s Haworth,” he was answered. “Jem Haworth, my lad.”

And he was left there lying in the dark while Haworth walked away, his heavy breathing a living presence in the air until he was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ A SUMMER AFTERNOON.”

“ LET it stay there a while,” Murdoch had said. “ I am not ready for it yet.” And it stayed there between the head-stone and the old stone wall covered with the long grass and closed in by it. He was not ready for it—yet. The days were not long enough for him as it was. His mother and Christian rarely saw him, but at such times as they did each recognised in him a new look and understood it. He began to live a strange excitable life. Rachel Ffrench did nothing by halves. He was seen with her constantly. It continually happened that where she was invited he was invited also. He forgot that he dreaded to meet strangers and had always held aloof from crowds. There were no strangers now and no crowds ; in any gathering there was only one presence, and this was enough for him. When

people would have cultivated him and drawn him out, he did not see their efforts; when a man or woman spoke to him they found out that he scarcely heard them, and that even as they talked he had unconsciously veered toward another point. He did things sometimes which made them stare at him.

“The fellow is like a ghost,” a man said of him once.

The simile was not a bad one. He did not think of what he might be winning or losing — for the time being mere existence was all-sufficient. At night he scarcely slept at all. Often he got up and rambled over the country in the darkness, not knowing where he was going or why he walked. He went through the routine of the day in haste and impatience, doing more work than was necessary and frequently amazing those around him by losing his temper and missing his mark. Ffrench began to regard him with wonder. Divers things were a source of wonder to Ffrench in these days. He understood Rachel less than ever and found her less satisfactory. He could not comprehend her motives. He had become

accustomed to feeling that she always had a motive in the background, and he made the natural mistake of supposing that she had one now. But she had none. She had suddenly given way to a mysterious impulse which overmastered her, and she let herself go, as it were. It did not matter to her that the time came when her course was discussed and marvelled at; upon the whole she felt a secret pleasure in defying public comment as usual, and going steadily in her own path.

She did strange things too. She began to go among the people who knew Murdoch best,—visiting the families of the men who worked under him, and leading them on to speaking of him and his way of life. It cannot be said that the honest matrons she honoured by her visits were very fond of her or exactly rejoiced when she appeared. They felt terribly out of place and awe-stricken when she sat down on their wooden chairs with her rich dress lying upon the pipe-clayed floors. Her beauty and her grandeur stunned them, however much they admired both.

“I tell yo’ she’s a lady,” they said. “She

knows nowt about poor folk, bless yo', but she's getten brass to gie away—an' she gies it wi'out makin' a doment. I mun say it puts me out a bit to see her coom in, but she does na go out wi'out leavin' summat."

She made no pretence of bringing sympathy and consolation ; she merely gave money, and money ~~was~~ was an equivalent ; and after all it was something of an event to have her carriage stop before the gate and see her descend and enter in all her splendour. The general vague idea which prevailed was that she meant to be charitable after the manner of her order,—but that was a mistake too.

It happened at last that one day her carriage drew up before the house at whose window Murdoch's mother and Christian sat at work.

It was Saturday, and Janey Briarley, in her “cleanin' up” apparel, opened the door for her.

“They're in th' parlour,” she answered in reply to her question. “Art tha coom to see 'em ?”

When she was ushered into the parlour in question, Mrs. Murdoch rose with her work in

her hand ; Christian rose also and stood in the shadow. They had never had a visitor before, and had not expected such a one as this.

They thought at first that she had come upon some errand, but she had not. She gave no reason for her presence other than she would have given in making any call of ceremony.

As she sat on the narrow sofa, she saw all the room and its meagreness, — its smallness, its scant, plain furnishing ; its ugly carpet and walls ; the straight, black dress of the older woman, the dark beauty of the girl, who did not sit down but stood behind her chair, watching. This beauty was the only thing which relieved the monotony of the place, but it was the most grating thing she saw, to Rachel Ffrench. It roused within her a slow anger. She resented it, and felt that she would like to revenge herself upon it quietly. She had merely meant to try the effect of these people and their surroundings upon herself as a fine experiment, but the effect was a stronger one than she had anticipated. When she went away Christian accompanied her to the door.

In the narrow passage Rachel Ffrench turned and looked at her—giving her a glance from head to foot.

“I think I have seen you before,” she said. ‘

“You *know* you have seen me,” the girl answered.

“I have seen you on the Continent. Your apartment was opposite to ours in Paris—when you were with your mother. I used to watch the people go in and out. You are very like your mother.”

And she left her, not looking back once—as if there was no living creature behind, or as if she had forgotten that there was one.

Christian went back to the room within. She sat down but did not take up her work again.

“Do you know why she came?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“She came to look at us—to see what manner of people we were—to see how we lived—to measure the distance between our life and hers.”

“As she went away,” she went on, “she

remembered that she had seen me before. She told me that I was very like my mother.”

She leaned forward, her hands clasped palm to palm between her knees.

“There was a man who did my mother a great wrong once,” she said. “They had loved each other in a mad sort of way for a long time, but in the end, I suppose, he got tired, for suddenly he went away. When he was gone, my mother did not speak of him, and it was as if he had never lived, but she grew haggard and dreadful, and lost her beauty. I was a little child, and she took me with her and began to travel from one place to another. I did not know why at first, but I found out afterward. She was following him. She found him in Paris, at last, after two years. One foggy night she took me to a narrow street near one of the theatres, and after we got there I knew she was waiting for some one, because she walked to and fro between two of the street lamps, dragging me by the hand. She walked so for half an hour, and then the man came, not knowing we were there. She went to him, dragging me with her, and when she stood

in front of him, threw back her veil and let the light shine upon her. She lifted her hand and struck him—struck him full upon the face, panting for breath. ‘I am a woman,’ she said. ‘I am a woman and I have *struck* you! Remember it to your last hour, as I shall!’ I thought that he would strike her back, but he did not. His hands fell at his sides, and he stood before her pale and helpless. I think it was even more terrible than she had meant it to be——”

Mrs. Murdoch stopped her, almost angrily.

“Why do you go back to it?” she demanded.

“Why should you think of such a story now?”

“It came to me,” she answered. “I was thinking that it is true that I am like her,—I bear a grudge such a long time, and it will not die out. It is her blood which is strong in me. She spoke the truth.”

Early in the afternoon Rachel Ffrench, sauntering about the garden in the sun, saw Murdoch coming down the road toward the house,—not until he had first seen her however. His eyes were fixed upon her when she turned, and it seemed as if he found it impossible to remove

them even for a breath's space. Since his glance had first caught the pale blue of her dress he had not once looked away from it. All the morning, in the midst of the smoke and din of the work-rooms, he had been thinking of the hours to come. The rest of the day lay before him. The weather was dazzling; the heat of summer was in the air; the garden was ablaze with flowers whose brightness seemed never to have been there before; there was here and there the drone of a bee, and now and again a stir of leaves. The day before had been of another colour and so might the morrow be, but to-day left nothing to be believed in except its own sun and beauty.

When at last he was quite near her, he seemed for a little while to see nothing but the faint pale blue of her dress. He never forgot it afterward, and never remembered it without a sense of summer heat and languor. He could not have told what he said to her, or if he at first spoke at all. Soon she began to move down the path and he followed her,—simply followed her,—stopping when she stopped to break a flower from its stem.

It was as she bent forward once that she told him of what she had done.

“This morning,” she said, “I went to see your mother.”

“She told me so,” he answered.

She broke the stem of the flower and stood upright, holding it in her hand.

“You do not ask me why I went,” she said.

“Why?” he asked.

Their eyes met, and she was silent for a little. Then she said with perfect deliberateness :

“I have known nothing of the life you live. I wanted to see it for myself. I wanted—to bring it near.”

He drew quite close to her, his face pale, his eyes burning.

“Near!” he repeated. “To bring it near! Do you—do you know what you have said?”

“To bring it near,” she said again, with no less deliberateness than before, but with a strange softness.

Just for to-day, she had told herself, she would try the sensation of being swept onward by the stream. But she weighed herself as she spoke,

and weighed him and his passion, and her power against its force.

But he came no closer to her. He did not attempt to touch even her hand or her dress. His own hands fell helplessly at his sides, and he stood still before her.

“ Oh God ! ” he said, in a hushed voice, “ how happy I am ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

“GOD BLESS YOU!”

LATE the same night, Mrs. Haworth, who had been watching for her son alone in the grand, desolate room in which it was her lot to sit, rose to her feet on hearing him enter the house.

The first object which met his eye when he came in was her little figure and her patient face turned toward the door. As he crossed the threshold, she took a few steps as if to meet him, and then stopped.

“Jem!” she exclaimed. “Jem!”

Her voice was tremulous and her eyes bright with the indefinable feeling which seized upon her the moment she saw his face. Her utterance of his name was a cry of anxiousness and fear.

“What!” he said. “Are you here yet?”

He came to her and laid a hand upon her shoulder in a rough caress.

“ You'd better go to bed,” he said to her.
“ It's late and I've got work to do.”

“ I felt,” she answered, “ as if I'd like to wait
an' see you. I knowed I should sleep better for
it—I always do.”

There was a moment's pause, in which she
lovingly stroked his sleeve with her withered
hand. Then he spoke.

“ Sleep better!” he said. “ That's a queer
notion. You've got queer fancies, you women—
some on you.”

Then stooped and kissed her awkwardly. He
always did it with more or less awkwardness and
lack of ease, but it never failed to make her
happy.

“ Now you've done it,” he said. “ You'd
better go, old lady, and leave me to finish what
I've got to do.”

“ It's late for work, Jem,” she answered.
“ You oughn't to try yourself so much.”

“ It ain't work so much,” he said, “ as thinking.
There's summat I've got to think out.”

For the moment he seemed quite to forget her.
He stood with his hands thrust into his pockets

and his feet apart, staring at the carpet. He did not stir when she moved away, and was still standing so when she turned at the door to look at him.

What she saw brought her back hurried and tearful.

“ Let me stay ! ” she cried. “ Let me stay. There’s trouble in your face, Jem, for I see it. Don’t keep it from me—for the sake of what we’ve been through together in times that’s past.”

He bestirred himself and looked up at her.

“ Trouble ! ” he repeated. “ That’s not the word. It’s not trouble, old lady, and it’s naught that can be helped. There’s me and it to fight it out. Go and get your sleep and leave us to it.”

She went slowly and sadly. She always obeyed him, whatever his wish might be.

When the last sound of her faltering feet had died away upon the stairs, he went to the side-board and poured out a glass of raw brandy and drank it.

“ I want summat to steady me,” he said,—“ and to warm me.”

But it did not steady him at least. When he sat down at the table, the hand he laid upon it shook.

He looked at it curiously, clinching and unclinchng it.

“ I'm pretty well done for when it goes like that,” he said. “ I'm farther gone than I thought. It's all over me—over and through me. I'm shaking like a fool.”

He broke out with a torrent of curses.

“ Is it me that's sitting here,” he cried, “ or some other chap? Is it me that luck's gone again on every side, or a chap that's useder to it ? ”

Among all his pangs of humiliation and baffled passion there was not one so subtle and terrible in its influence upon him as his momentary sense of physical weakness. He understood it less than all the rest, and raged against it more. His body had never failed him once, and now for the first time he felt that its power faltered. He was faint, and cold, and trembled, not merely from excitement, but from loss of strength.

Opposite to him, at the other side of the room, was a full length mirror. Accidentally raising his eyes towards it he caught sight of his own face. He started back and unconsciously glanced behind him.

“Who——!” he began.

And then he stopped, knowing the face for his own—white-lipped, damp with cold sweat, lined with harsh furrows—evil to see. He got up, shaking his fist at it, crying out through his shut teeth.

“Blast her !” he said. “Who’s to blame but her ?”

He had given up all for her—his ambition, which had swept all before it; his greatest strength, his very sins and coarseness, and half an hour ago he had passed the open door of a room and had seen Murdoch standing motionless, not uttering a word, but with his face fairly transfigured by his ecstasy, and with her hand crushed against his breast.

He had gone in to see Ffrench, and had remained with him for an hour in one of the parlours, knowing that the two were alone in

the other. He had heard their voices now and then, and had known that once they went out upon the terrace and talked there. He had grown burning hot and deadly cold, and had strained his ears for every sound, and never caught more than a word or low laugh coming from Rachel Ffrench. At last he had left his partner, and on his way out had passed the open door. They had come back to the room, and Murdoch was saying his good-night. He held Rachel Ffrench's hand, and she made no effort to withdraw it, but gave it to his caress. She did not move nor speak, but her eyes rested upon his rapt face with an expression not easy to understand. Haworth did not understand it, but the rage which seized and shook him was the most brutal emotion he had ever felt in his life. It was a madness which left him weak. He staggered down the stairs and out into the night blindly, blaspheming as he went. He did not know how he reached home. The sight his mother had seen, and which had drawn a cry from her, and checked her midway in the room, had been cause enough for tremor in her.

Nothing but the most violent effort had saved him from an outbreak in her presence. He was weaker for the struggle when she was gone.

He could think of nothing but of Rachel Ffrench's untranslatable face, and of Murdoch's close clasp of her surrendered hand.

“What has she ever give me?” he cried. “*Me*, that's played the fool for her! What's he done that he should stand there and fondle her as if he'd bought and paid for her? I'm the chap that paid for her! She's mine, body and soul, by George, if every man had his rights!”

And then, remembering all that had gone by, he turned from hot to cold again.

“I've stood up agen her a long time,” he said, “and what have I got? I swore I'd make my way with her, and how far have I gone? She's never give me a word, by George, or a look that'd be what another woman would have give. She's not even played with me—most on 'em would have done that—but she's not. She's gone on her way and let me go on mine. She's turned neither right nor left for me—I wasn't man enough.”

He wore himself out in the end and went to the brandy again, and drank of it deeply. It sent him upstairs with heated blood and feverish brain. It was after midnight, and he went to his room, but not to sleep. He lay upon his pillow in the darkness thinking of the things he had done in the past few months, and of the fruit the first seed he had sown might bring forth.

“There's things that may happen to any on us, my lad,” he said, “and some on 'em might happen to you. If it's Jem Haworth that's to lose, the other shan't gain, by George !”

He had put the light out and lay in the darkness, and was so lying with this mood at work upon him when there came a timid summons on the door, and it opened and some one came in softly.

He knew who it was, even before she spoke.

“Jem,” she said, “Jem, you're not asleep, my dear.”

“No,” he answered.

She came to the bedside and stood there.

“I—I couldn't sleep,” she said. “Something's a little wrong with me. I'm gettin' foolish, an'

—an’ fearful. I felt as if you wasn’t quite safe. I thought I’d come and speak to you.”

“ You’re out o’ sorts,” he answered. “ You’ll have to be looked after.”

“ It’s nothing but my foolish way,” she replied. “ You’re very good to me—an’ me so full of fancies. Would you—would you mind me a-kneelin’ down an’ sayin’ a prayer here to myself as I used to when you was a boy, Jem ? I think it’d do me good. Would you mind it ?”

“ No,” he answered, hoarsely. “ Kneel down.”

And she knelt and grasped for his hand and held it, and he heard her whispering in the dark as he had been wont to hear her nearly thirty years before.

And when it was over, she got up and kissed him on the forehead.

“ God bless you, my dear !” she said. “ God bless you !” and went away.

CHAPTER X.

“IT IS DONE WITH.”

AFTER the departure of Haworth and Murdoch, Mr. Ffrench waited for some time for his daughter's appearance. He picked up a pamphlet and turned over its leaves uneasily, trying to read here and there, and making no great success of the effort. He was in a disturbed and nervous mood—the evening had been a trial to him, more especially the latter part of it, during which Haworth had sat on the other side of the table in his usually awkwardly free-and-easy posture, his hands in his pockets, his feet thrust out before him. His silence and the expression he had worn had not been of an order to relieve his companion of any tithe of the burden which had gradually accumulated upon his not too muscular shoulders. At the outset Ffrench had been simply bewildered, then somewhat anxious

and annoyed, but to-day he had been stunned. Haworth's departure was an immense relief to him—in fact, it was often a relief to him in these days. Then he had heard Murdoch descend the stairs and leave the house, and waited with mingled dread and anxiousness for Rachel's coming. But she did not make her appearance. He heard her walk across the room after Murdoch left her, and then she did not seem to move again.

After the lapse of half an hour he laid his pamphlet aside and rose himself. He coughed two or three times and paced the floor a little—gradually he edged toward the folding doors leading into the front room and passed through them.

Rachel stood at one of the windows which was thrown open. She was leaning against its side and looking out into the night. When she turned toward him something in her manner caused in Ffrench an increase of nervousness amounting to irritation.

“ You wish to say something to me,” she remarked. “ What is it ? ”

“ Yes,” he answered. “ I wish to say something to you.”

He could not make up his mind to say it for a moment or so. He found himself returning her undisturbed glance with an excited and bewildered one.

“ I—the fact is—” he broke forth, desperately, “ I—I do not understand you.”

“ That is not at all singular,” she replied. “ You have often said so before.”

He began to lose his temper and walk about the room.

“ You have often chosen to seem incomprehensible,” he said, “ but *this* is the most extraordinary thing you have done yet. You—you must know that it looks very bad—that people are discussing you openly—*you* of all women ! ”

Suddenly he wheeled about and stopped, staring at her with more uncertainty and bewilderment than ever.

“ I ought to know you better,” he said. “ I do know you better than to think you capable of any weakness of—of that kind. You are *not*

capable of it: You are too proud and too fond of yourself, and yet——”

“And yet what?” she demanded, in a peculiar, low voice.

He faltered visibly.

“And yet you are permitting yourself to—to be talked over and—misunderstood.”

“Do you think,” she asked, in the same voice, “that I care for being ‘talked over’?”

“You would care if you knew what is said,” he responded. “You do not know.”

“I can guess,” she replied, “easily.”

But she was deadly pale and he saw it, and her humiliation was that she *knew* he saw it.

“What you do,” he continued, “is of more consequence than what most women do. You are not popular. You have held yourself very high, and have set people at defiance. If you should be guilty of a romantic folly, it would go harder with you than with others.”

“I know that,” she answered him, “far better than you do.”

She held herself quite erect and kept her eyes steadily upon him.

“What is the romantic folly?” she put it to him.

He could not have put it into words just then if his life had depended upon his power to do it.

“You will not commit it,” he said. “It is not in you to do it, but you have put yourself in a false position, and it is very unpleasant for both of us.”

She stopped him.

“You are very much afraid of speaking plainly,” she said. “Be more definite.”

He actually flushed to the roots of his hair in his confusion and uneasiness. There was no way out of the difficulty.

“You have adopted such a manner with the world generally,” he floundered, “that a concession from you means a great deal. You—you have been making extraordinary concessions. It is easy to see that this young fellow is madly enamoured of you. He does not know how to conceal it, and he does not try. You have not seemed to demand that he should. You have let him follow you, and come and go as his passion and simplicity prompted him. One might say

you had encouraged him—though encouraged seems hardly the word to use.”

“No,” she interrupted, “it is not the word to use.”

“He has made himself conspicuous and you too, and you have never protested by word or deed. When he was in danger you actually risked your life for him.”

“Great heaven!” she ejaculated.

The memory of the truth of what he had said came upon her like a flash. Until this moment she had only seen the night from one standpoint, and to see it from this one was a deadly blow to her. She lost her balance.

“How dare you?” she cried, breathlessly. “I was mad with excitement. If I had stopped to think——”

“You usually do stop to think,” he put in. “That was why I was amazed. You did a thing without calculating its significance. You never did so before in your life. You know that it is true. You pride yourself upon it.”

He could have said nothing so bitter and terrible. For the moment they had changed

places. It was he who had presented a weakness to her. She did pride herself upon her cool power of calculation.

“Go on!” she exclaimed.

“He has been here half the day,” he proceeded, growing bolder. “You were out in the garden together all the afternoon—he has only just left you. When you contrast his position with yours is not *that* an extraordinary thing? What should you say if another woman had gone so far? Two years ago, he was Haworth's engineer. He is a wonderful fellow and a genius, and the world will hear of him yet. *I* should never think of anything but that, if I were the only individual concerned, but you—you treated him badly enough at first.”

She turned paler and paler.

“You think that I—that I——”

She had meant to daunt him with the most daring speech she could make, but it would not complete itself. She faltered and broke down.

“I don't know what to think,” he answered, desperately. “It seems impossible. Good hea-

vens ! it *is* impossible !—you—it is not in your nature.”

“ No,” she said, “ it is not.”

Even in that brief space she had recovered herself wholly. She met his glance just as she had met it before, even with more perfect *sang froid*.

“ I will tell you what to think,” she went on. “ I have been very dull here. I wished from the first that I had never come. I hate the people, and I despise them more than hate them. I must be amused and interested, and they are less than nothing. The person you speak of was different. I suppose what you say of him is true and he is a genius. I care nothing for that in itself, but he has managed to interest me. At first I thought him only absurd ; he was of a low class, and a common workman, and he was so simple and ignorant of the world that he did not feel his position or did not care. That amused me, and I led him on to revealing himself. Then I found out that there was a difference between him and the rest of his class, and I began to study him. I have no sentimental notions about his

honour and good qualities. Those things do not affect me, but I have been interested and the time has passed more easily. Now the matter will end just as it began,—not because I am tired of him, or because I care for what people say, but because I think it is time,—and I choose that it should. It is done with from to-night.”

“Good heaven!” he cried. “You are not going to drop the poor fellow like that?”

“You may call it what you please,” she returned. “I have gone as far as I choose to go, and it is done with from to-night.”

Mr. Ffrench's excitement became something painful to see. Between his embarrassment as a weak nature before a strong one,—an embarrassment which was founded upon secret fear of unpleasant results,—between this and the natural compunctions arising from tendencies toward a certain refined and amiable sense of fairness, he well-nigh lost all control over himself and became courageous. He grew heated and flushed, and burst forth into protest.

“My dear,” he said, “I must say it's a—a deuced ungentlemanly business!”

Her lack of response absolutely inspired him.

“It’s a deuced ill-bred business,” he added, “from first to last.”

She did not reply even to that, so he went on, growing warmer and warmer.

“You have taunted me with being afraid of you,” he said, “though you have never put it into so many words. Perhaps I have been afraid of you. You can make yourself confoundedly unpleasant at times,—and I may have shrunk from saying what would rouse you,—but I must speak my mind about this, and say it is a deucedly cruel and unfair thing, and is unworthy of you. A less well-bred woman might have done it.”

A little colour rose to her cheek and remained there, but she did not answer still.

“He is an innocent fellow,” he proceeded, “an unworldly fellow ; he has lived in his books and his work, and he knows nothing of women. His passion for you is a pure, romantic one ; he would lay his world at your feet. Call it folly, if you will,—it *is* folly,—but allow me to tell you it is worthy of a better object.”

He was so astonished at his own daring that he stopped to see what effect it had produced.

She replied by asking a simple but utterly confounding question.

“ What,” she said, “ would you wish me to do ? ”

“ What would I wish you to do ? ” he stammered. “ What ? I—I hardly know,” he replied, weakly.

And after regarding her helplessly a little longer, he turned about and left the room.

CHAPTER XI.

“LOOK OUT!”

THE next morning he rather surprised Murdoch by walking into his cell with the evident intention of paying him a somewhat prolonged visit. It was not, however, the fact of his appearing there which was unusual enough to excite wonder, but the fact of a certain degree of mingled constraint and effusiveness in his manner. It was as if he was troubled with some mental compunctions which he was desirous of setting at rest. At times he talked very fast and in a comparatively light and jocular vein, and again he was silent for some minutes, invariably rousing himself from his abstraction with a sudden effort. Several times Murdoch found that he was regarding him with a disturbed air of anxiety.

Before going away he made an erratic and indecisive tour of the little room, glancing at

drawings and picking up first one thing and then another.

“ You have a good many things here,” he said, “ of one kind and another.”

“ Yes,” Murdoch answered, absently.

Ffrench glanced around at the jumble of mechanical odds and ends, the plans and models in various stages of neglect or completion.

“ It's a queer place,” he commented, “ and it has an air of significance. It's crammed with ideas—of one kind and another.”

“ Yes,” Murdoch answered, as before.

Ffrench approached him and laid his hand weakly on his shoulder.

“ You are a fellow of ideas,” he said, “ and you have a good deal before you. Whatever disappointments you might meet with, you would always have a great deal before you. You have ideas. I,” with apparent inconsequence, “ I haven't, you know.”

Murdoch looked somewhat puzzled, but he did not contradict him, so he repeated his statement.

“ I haven't, you know. I wish I had.”

Then he dropped his hand and looked indefinite again.

“I should always like you to remember that I am your friend,” he said. “I wish I could have been of more service to you. You are a fine fellow, Murdoch. I have admired you—I have liked you. Don’t forget it.”

And he went away carrying the burden of his indecision and embarrassment and good intention with much amiable awkwardness.

That day Murdoch did not see Rachel Ffrench. Circumstances occurred which kept him at work until a late hour. The next day it was the same story, and the next also. A series of incidents seemed to combine against him, and the end of each day found him worn out and fretted. But on the fourth he was free again, and early in the evening found himself within sight of the iron gates. Every pulse in his body throbbed as he passed through them. He was full of intense expectation. He could scarcely bear to think of what was before him. His desperate happiness was a kind of pain. One of his chief longings was that he might find her wearing the pale blue

dress again, and that when he entered she might be standing in the centre of the room as he had left her. Then it would seem as if there had been no nights and days between the last terribly happy moment and this. The thought which flashed across his mind that there might possibly be some one else in the room was a shock to him.

“ If she is not alone,” he said to himself, “ it will be unbearable.”

As he passed up the walk, he came upon a tall white lily blooming on one of the border beds. He was in a sufficiently mystical and emotional mood to be stopped by it.

“ It is like her,” he said. And he gathered it and took it with him to the house.

The first thing upon which his eye rested when he stood upon the threshold of the room was the pale blue colour, and she was standing just as he had left her, it seemed to him, upon the very same spot upon which they had parted. His wish had been realised so far at least.

He was obliged to pause a moment to regain

his self-control. It was an actual truth that he could not have trusted himself so far as to go in at once.

It was best that he did not. The next instant she turned and spoke to a third person at the other side of the room, and even as she did so caught sight of him and stopped.

“Here is Mr. Murdoch,” she said, and paused, waiting for him to come forward. She did not advance to meet him, did not stir until he was scarcely more than a pace from her. She simply waited, watching him as he moved toward her, as if she were a little curious to see what he would do. Then she gave him her hand, and he took it with a feeling that something unnatural had happened, or that he was suddenly awaking from a delusion.

He did not even speak. It was she who spoke, turning toward the person whom she had addressed before he entered.

“ You have heard us speak of Mr. Murdoch,” she said ; and then to himself, “ This is M. Saint Méran.”

M. Saint Méran rose and bowed profoundly.

He presented, as his best points, long, graceful limbs and a pair of clear grey eyes, which seemed to hold their opinions in check. He regarded Murdoch with an expression of suave interest, and made a well-bred speech of greeting.

Murdoch said nothing. He could think of nothing to say. He was never very ready of speech. He bowed with an uncertain air, and almost immediately wandered off to the other end of the room, holding his lily in his hand. He began to turn over the pages of a book of engravings, seeing none of them. After a little while a peculiar perfume close to him attracted his attention, and he looked downward vacantly and saw the lily. Then he laid it down and moved farther away.

Afterward—he did not know how long afterward—Ffrench came in. He seemed in a very feverish state of mind, talking a great deal and rather insanely, and forcing Murdoch to reply and join in the conversation.

M. Saint Méran held himself with a graceful air of security and self-poise, and made gentle efforts at scientific remark which should also have

an interest for genius of a mechanical and inventive turn. But Murdoch's replies were vague. His glance followed Rachel Ffrench. He devoured her with his eyes—a violence which she bore very well. At last—he had not been in the house an hour—he left his chair and went to her.

“I am going away,” he said, in an undertone.
“Good night!”

She did not seem to hear him. She was speaking to Saint Méran.

“Good night!” he repeated, in the same tone, not raising it at all, only somehow giving it an intense, concentrated sound.

She turned her face toward him.

“Good night!” she answered.

And he went away, Ffrench following him to the door with erratic and profuse regrets, which he did not hear at all.

When he got outside, he struck out across the country. The strength with which he held himself in check was a wonder to him. It seemed as if he was not thinking at all—that he did not allow himself to think. He walked fast, it might even be said, violently; the exertion made his head

throb and his blood rush through his veins. He walked until at last his heart beat so suffocatingly that he was forced to stop. He threw himself down—almost fell down upon the grass at the wayside—and lay with shut eyes. He was giddy and exhausted, and panted for breath. He could not have thought then, if he would; he had gained so much at least. He did not leave the place for an hour. When he did so, it was to walk home by another route, slowly, almost weakly. This route led him by the Briarley cottage, and, as he neared it, he was seized with a fancy for going in. The door was ajar and a light burned in the living room, and this drew him toward it.

Upon the table stood a basket filled with purchases, and near the basket lay a shawl, which Janey wore upon all occasions requiring a toilet. She had just come in from her shopping, and sat on a stool in her usual posture, not having yet removed the large bonnet which spread its brim around her small face, a respectable and steady-going aureole, enlivened with bunches of flowers, which in their better days

had rejoiced Mrs. Briarley's heart with exceeding great joy.

She looked up as he came in, but did not rise.

“Eh! it's thee, is it?” she remarked. “I thowt it wur toime tha wur comin'. Tha'st not been here fur nigh a month.”

“I have been—doing a great deal.”

“Ay,” she answered. “I suppose so.”

She jerked her thumb toward Granny Dixon's basket-chair, which stood empty.

“She's takken down,” she said. “She wur takken down a week sin', an' a noice toime we're ha'in' nursin' her. None on us can do anything wi' her but mother—*she* can settle her, thank th' Amoigthy.”

She rested her sharp little elbows upon her knees and her chin upon both palms, and surveyed him with interest.

“Has tha seed him?” she demanded, suddenly.

“Who?” he asked.

“Him,” with a nod of her head. “Th' furriner as is stayin' at Mester Ffrench's. Yo' mun ha' seen him. He's been theer three days.”

“I saw him this evening.”

“I thowt tha mun ha’ seed him. He coom o’ Monday. He coom fro’ France. I should na,” with a tone of serious speculation,— “I should na ha’ thowt she’d ha’ had a Frenchman.”

She moved her feet and settled herself more conveniently, without moving her eyes from his face.

“I dunnot think much o’ Frenchmen mysen,” she proceeded. “An’ neyther does mother, but they say as this is a rich un an’ a grand un. She’s lived i’ France a good bit, an’ happen she does na’ moind their ways. She’s knowed him afore.”

“When?” he asked.

“When she wur theer. She lived theer, yo’ know.”

Yes, he remembered she had lived there. He said nothing more, only sat watching the little stunted figure and sharp, small face with a sense of mild fascination, wondering dully how much she knew and where she had learned it all, and what she would say next. But she gave him

no further information—chiefly because she had no more on hand, there being a limit even to her sagacity. She became suddenly interested in himself.

“Yo’re as pale as if yo’d had th’ whoopin’ cough,” she remarked “What’s wrong wi’ yo’?”

“I am tired,” he answered. “Worn out.”

It was true enough, but did not satisfy her. Her matter-of-fact and matronly mind arrived at a direct solution of the question.

“Did yo’ ivver think,” she put it to him, “as she’d ha’ yo’!”

He had no answer to give her. He began to turn deathly white about the lips. She surveyed him with increased interest and proceeded:

“Mother an’ me’s talked it over,” she said. “We tak’ th’ *Ha’penny Reader*, and theer wur a tale in it as towd o’ one o’ th’ nobility as wed a workin’ chap—an’ mother she said as happen she wur loike her an’ ud do it, but I said she would na. Th’ chap i’ th’ tale turnt out to be a earl, as ud been kidnapped by th’ gipsies, but yo’ nivver wur kidnappt, an’ she’s noan o’ th’ soft koind. The Lady *Geraldine* wur a difrient

mak'. Theer wur na mich i' her to my moind. She wur allus makkin' out as brass wur nowt, an' talkin' about 'humble virchew ' as if theer wur nowt loike it. Yo' would na ketch *her* talkin' that road.

“Mother she'd sit an' cry until th' babby's bishop wur wet through, but I nivver seed nowt to cry about mysen. She getten th' chap i' th' eend, an' he turnt out to be a earl after aw. But I towd mother as marryin' a workin' man wur na i' *her* loine.”

Murdoch burst into a harsh laugh and got up.

“I've been pretty well talked over, it seems,” he said. “I didn't know that before.”

“Ay,” replied Janey, coolly. “We've talked yo' ower a good bit. Are yo' goin'?”

“Yes,” he answered, “I am going.”

He went out with an uncertain movement, leaving the door open behind him. As he descended the steps, the light from the room, slanting out into the darkness, struck athwart a face, the body pertaining to which seemed to be leaning against the palings, grasping them with

both hands. It was the face of Mr. Briarley, who regarded him with a mingled expression of anxiety and desire to propitiate.

“Is it yo’?” he whispered, as Murdoch neared him.

“Yes,” he was answered, somewhat shortly.

Mr. Briarley put out a hand and plucked him by the sleeve.

“I’ve been waitin’ fur yo’,” he said, in a sonorous whisper, which only failed to penetrate the innermost recesses of the dwelling through some miracle.

Murdoch turned out of the gate.

“Why?” he asked.

Mr. Briarley glanced towards the house uneasily, and also up and down the road.

“Let’s get out o’ th’ way a bit,” he remarked.

Murdoch walked on, and he shuffled a few paces behind him. When they got well into the shadow of the hedge, he stopped. Suddenly he dropped upon his knees, and crawling through a very small gap into the field behind, remained there for a few seconds, then he reappeared panting.

“Theer’s no one theer,” he said. “I would na ha’ risked theer bein’ one on ‘em lyin’ under th’ hedge.”

“One of whom?” Murdoch inquired.

“I did na say who,” he answered.

When he stood on his feet again, he took his companion by the button.

“Theer’s a friend o’ moine,” he said, “as ‘as sent a messidge to yo’. This here’s it—‘*Look out!*’”

“What does it mean?” Murdoch asked.
“Speak more plainly.”

Mr. Briarley became evidently disturbed.

“Nay,” he said, “that theer’s plain enow fur me. It ud do *my* business i’ quick toime if I——”

He stopped and glanced about him again, and then, without warning, threw himself, so to speak, on Murdoch’s shoulder, and began to pour a flood of whispers into his ear.

“Theer wur a chap as were a foo’,” he said, “an’ he was drawed into bein’ a bigger foo’ than common. It wur him as getten yo’ i’ trouble wi’ th’ stroikers. He did na mean no ill, an’—an’ he

ses, ‘I’ll tell him to look out. I’ll run th’ risk.’ He knowed what wur goin’ on, an’ he ses, ‘I’ll tell him to look out.’”

“Who was he?” Murdoch interposed.

Mr. Briarley fell back a pace, perspiring profusely, and dabbing at his forehead with his cap.

“He—he wur a friend o’ moine,” he stammered,—“a friend o’ moine as has getten a way o’ gettin’ hissen i’ trouble, an’ he ses, ‘I’ll tell him to look out.’”

“Tell him from me,” said Murdoch, “that I am not afraid of anything that may happen.”

It was a rash speech, but was not so defiant as it sounded. His ‘only feeling was one of cold carelessness. He wanted to get free and go away, and end his night in his silent room at home. But Mr. Briarley kept up with him, edging toward him apologetically as he walked.

“Yo’re set agen th’ chap fur bein’ a foo’,” he persisted, breathlessly, “an’ I dunnot blame yo’. He’s set agen hissen. He’s a misforchnit chap as

is allus i' trouble. It's set heavy on him, an' ses he, 'I'll tell him to look out.'"

At a turn into a by-lane he stopped.

"I'll go this road," he said, "an' I'll tell him as I've done it."

CHAPTER XII.

“IT HAS ALL BEEN A LIE.”

IN a week's time Saint Méran had become a distinct element in the social atmosphere of Broxton and vicinity. He fell into his place at Rachel Ffrench's side with the naturalness of a man who felt he had some slight claim upon his position. He was her father's guest ; they had seen a great deal of each other abroad. Any woman might have felt his well-bred homage a delicate compliment. He was received as an agreeable addition to society ; he attended her upon all occasions. From the window of his work-room Murdoch saw him drive by with her in her carriage, saw him drop into the bank for a friendly chat with Ffrench, who regarded him with a mixture of nervousness and admiration.

Haworth, having gone away again, had not heard of him. Of late the Works had seen little

of its master. He made journeys hither and thither, and on his return from such journeys invariably kept the place in hot water. He drove the work on and tyrannised over the hands from foremen to puddlers. At such times there was mysterious and covert rebellion, and some sharp guessing as to what was going on, but it generally ended in this. Upon the whole the men were used to being bullied, and some of them worked the better for it.

Murdoch went about his work as usual, though there was not a decent man in the place who did not gradually awaken to the fact that some singular change was at work upon him. He concentrated all his mental powers upon what he had to do during work hours, and so held himself in check, but he spent all his leisure in a kind of apathy, sitting in his cell at his work-table in his old posture, his forehead supported by his hands, his fingers locked in his tumbled hair. Sometimes he was seized with fits of nervous trembling which left him weak. When he left home in the morning he did not return until night, and ate no mid-day meal.

As yet he was only drifting here and there; he had arrived at no conclusions; he did not believe in his own reasoning; the first blow had simply stunned him. A man who had been less reserved and who had begun upon a fair foundation of common knowledge would have understood; he understood nothing but his passion, his past rapture, and that a mysterious shock had fallen upon him.

He lived in this way for more than a week, and then he roused himself to make a struggle. One bright, sunny day, after sitting dumbly for half an hour or so, he staggered to his feet and took up his hat.

“I’ll — try — again,” he said, mechanically. “I’ll try again. I don’t know what it means. It may have been my fault. I don’t think it was—but it may have been. Perhaps I expected too much.” And he went out.

After he had been absent some minutes, Ffrench came in from the bank. He had been having a hard morning of it. The few apparently unimportant indiscretions in the way of private speculation of which he had been guilty were beginning

to present themselves in divers unpleasant forms, and to assume an air of importance he had not believed possible. His best ventures had failed him, and things which he was extremely anxious to keep from Haworth's ears were assuming a shape which would render it difficult to manage them privately. He was badgered and baited on all sides, and naturally began to see his own folly. His greatest fear was not so much that he should lose the money he had risked, as that Haworth should discover his luckless weakness and confront and crush him with it. As he stood in fear of his daughter, so he stood in fear of Haworth ; but his dread of Haworth was, perhaps, the stronger feeling of the two. His very refinement added to it. Having gained the object of his ambition, he had found it not exactly what he had pictured it. Haworth had not spared him, the very hands had derided his enthusiastic and strenuous efforts ; he had secretly felt that his position was ridiculous, and provocative of satire among the unscientific herd. When he had done anything which should have brought him success and helped him to

assert himself, it had somehow always failed, and now——

He sat down in the managerial chair before Haworth's great table, strewn with papers and bills. He had shut the door behind him, and was glad to be alone.

“I am extremely unfortunate,” he faltered aloud. “I don't know how to account for it.” And he glanced about him helplessly. Before the words had fairly left his lips his privacy was broken in upon. The door was flung open and Murdoch came in. He had evidently walked fast, for he was breathing heavily, and he had plainly expected to find the room empty. He looked at Ffrench, sat down, and wiped his lips.

“I want you,” he began, with laboured articulation, “I want you—to tell me—what—I have done.”

Ffrench could only stare at him.

“I went to the house,” he said, “and asked for her.” (He did not say for whom, nor was it necessary that he should. Ffrench understood him perfectly.) “I swear I saw her standing at the window as I went up the path. She had a

purple dress on—and a white flower in her hair—and Saint Méran was at her side. Before, the man at the door never waited for me to speak; this time he stood and looked at me. I said, ‘I want to see Miss Ffrench;’ he answered, ‘She is not at home.’—‘Not at home,’” breaking into a rough laugh—“‘not at home ’to *me* !”

He clenched his fist and dashed it against the chair.

“ What does it mean ? ” he cried out. “ What does it *mean* ? ”

Ffrench quaked.

“ I—I don't know,” he answered, and his own face gave him the lie.

Murdoch caught his words up and flung them back at him.

“ You don't know ! ” he cried. “ Then I will tell you. It means that she has been playing me false from first to last.”

Ffrench felt his position becoming weaker and weaker. Here was a state of affairs he had never seen before; here was a madness which concealed nothing, which defied all, which flung all social

presuppositions to the winds. He ought to have been able to palter and equivocate, to profess well-bred surprise and some delicate indignation, to be dignified and subtle ; but he was not. He could only sit and wonder what would come next, and feel uncomfortable and alarmed. The thing which came next he had not expected any more than he had expected the rest of the outbreak.

Suddenly a sullen calmness settled upon the young fellow—a calm which spoke of some fierce determination.

“ I don’t know why I should have broken out like this before you,” he said. “ Seeing you here when I expected to fight it out alone, surprised me into it. But there is one thing I am going to do. I’ll hear the truth from her own lips. When you go home I will go with you. They won’t turn me back then, and I’ll see her face to face.”

“ I——” began Ffrench, and then added, completely overwhelmed, “ Very — perhaps it would be—be best.”

“ Best ! ” echoed Murdoch, with another laugh.

“ No, it won't be best ; it will be worst ; but I'll do it for all that.”

And he dropped his head upon the arms he had folded on the chair's back, and so sat in a forlorn, comfortless posture, not speaking, not stirring, as if he did not know that there was any presence in the room but his own.

And he kept his word. As Ffrench was going out into the street at dusk he felt a touch on his shoulder, and turning, found that he stood close behind him.

“ I'm ready,” he said, “ if you are.”

When they reached the house, the man who opened the door stared at them blankly, which so irritated Ffrench that he found an excuse for administering a sharp rebuke to him about some trifle.

“ They are always making some stupid blunder,” he said to Murdoch as they passed upstairs to the drawing-room.

But Murdoch did not hear.

It was one of the occasions on which Rachel Ffrench reached her highest point of beauty.

Her black velvet dress was almost severe in its simplicity, and her one ornament was the jewelled star in her high *coiffure*. M. Saint Méran held his place at her side. He received Murdoch with *empressement*, and exhibited much tact and good feeling. But Murdoch would have none of him. He had neither tact nor experience.

His time did not come until the evening was nearly over, and it would never have come if he had not at last forced her to confront him by making his way to her side with a daring which was so novel in him that it would have mastered another woman.

Near her he trembled a little, but he said what he had come to say.

“To-day,” he said, “when I called — your servant told me you were not at home.”

She paused a moment before answering, but when she did answer he trembled no more.

“That was unfortunate,” she said.

“It was not true—I saw you at the window.”

She looked him quietly in the face, answering him in two words :

“Did you ?”

He turned on his heel and walked away. His brain whirled ; he did not know how he got out of the room. He was scarcely conscious of existence until he found himself out of doors. He got beyond the gate and into the road and to the end of the road, but there he stopped and turned back. He went back until he found he was opposite the house again, looking up at the lighted window, he did not know why. A sharp rain was falling, but he did not feel it. He stood staring at the window, mechanically plucking at the leaves on the hedge near him. He scarcely knew whether it was a curse or a sob which fell from his lips and awakened him at last.

“Am I going mad ?” he said. “Do men go mad through such things ? God forbid—if there is a God ! It has all been a lie—a lie—a lie !!”

CHAPTER XIII.

“ANOTHER MAN!”

IN two days Haworth returned. He came from the station one morning, not having been home. He did not go to the Works, but to the bank and straight into Ffrench's private room.

The look this unhappy gentleman gave him when he saw him was a queer mixture of anxiety, furtive query, and amiably frank welcome,—the frank welcome a very faint element indeed, though it was brought to light by a violent effort. Haworth shut the door and locked it, and then turned upon him, his face black with rage.

“Say summat!” he ground out through his teeth. “Say summat as'll keep me from smashing every bone in your body!”

French gave him one hopeless glance and
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wilted into a drooping, weakly, protesting, humiliated figure.

“Don't—don't be so severe, Haworth,” he said. “I—I——”

“Blast you!” burst in Haworth, pitilessly. “You've ruined me !”

He spoke under his breath. No one in the room beyond could hear a word, but it was a thousand times more terrible than if he had roared at the top of his voice, as was his custom when things went amiss.

“ You've ruined me !” he repeated. “ *You!* A chap that's played gentleman manufacturer ; a chap I've laughed at ; a chap I took in to serve my own ends—ruined me, by ——.”

“Oh, no, no !” the culprit cried out. “ My dear fellow, no ! No, no !”

Haworth strode up to him and struck his fist against the table.

“Have I ever told you a word of what was going on ?” he demanded.

“No! no !”

“Have I ever let you be aught but what I swore you should be at th' first—a fellow

to play second fiddle and do what he was told?”

Ffrench turned pale. A less hard nature would have felt more sympathy for him.

“No,” he answered, “you have not,” and his chin dropped on his breast.

Haworth shook his fist in his face. He was in a frenzy of rage and despair.

“It’s been going from bad to worse for six months,” he said; “but you were not up to seeing it stare you in the face. Strikes are the things for trade to thrive on! One place after another gone down and Jem Haworth’s stood up. Jem Haworth’s outdone ‘em all. I’ve not slept for three month, my lad. I’ve fought it like a tiger! I’ve not left a stone unturned. I’ve held my mouth shut and my eyes open,—ay, and held my breath too. I’ve swore every time I saw daylight that I’d hold it out to the end and show ‘em all what Haworth was made of, and how he stood when th’ nobs went down at the first drive. I’d sooner have hell than what’s bound to come now! And it’s you that’s done it. You’ve lost me twenty thousand pound,—

twenty thousand, when ten’s worth more to me than a hundred was twelve month since ! ”

Ffrench quailed like a woman.

“ Are—are you going to murder me ? ” he said.
“ You look as if you were.”

Haworth turned on his heel.

“ You’re not worth it,” he answered, “ or I’d do it, by the Lord Harry.”

Then he came back to him.

“ I’ve paid enow for what I’ve never had, by George,” he said, with bitter grimness.

“ For what you have——” Ffrench began.

Haworth stopped him by flinging himself down in a chair near him—so near that their faces were brought within uncomfortably close range of each other. There was no avoiding his eye.

“ You know what,” he sneered. “ None better.”

“ I——” Ffrench faltered.

“ Blast you ! ” said Haworth. “ You played her like bait to a fish—in your gentleman’s fashion.”

French felt a little sick. It was not unnatural

that he should. A man of refined instincts likes less than any other man to be confronted brutally with the fact that he has, however delicately, tampered with a coarseness.

Haworth went on.

“ You knew how to do it, and you did it—gentleman way. You knew me, and you knew I was hard hit, and you knew I’d make a big throw. That was between us two, though we never said a word. I’d never give up a thing in my life before; and I was mad for her. She knew how to hold me off, and gave me plenty to think of. What else had you, my lad? ‘Haworth’s’ didn’t want a gentleman; ‘Haworth’s’ didn’t want brass, and you’d none to give if it did. It wasn’t *you* who was took in partner; it was what Jem Haworth was aiming at—and has missed, by —.”

He got up, and, pushing his chair back, made a stride towards the door. Ffrench was sure he was going away without another word, but he suddenly stopped and turned back.

“ I’d sooner take hell than what’s comin’,” he repeated, in a hoarse whisper. “ And it’s you

that's brought it on me ; but if I'd got what I aimed at, it might have come and welcome.”

Then he went out.

He went across to the Works, and, going into his room, he found Murdoch standing at one of the windows gazing out at something in the street. He was haggard and gaunt, and had a vacant look. It occurred to Haworth that some sudden physical ailment had attacked him. He went up to his side.

“What have you found, lad ?” he demanded.

The next instant his own eyes discovered what it was. An open carriage was just drawing up before the bank. Rachel Ffrench sat in it and Saint Méran was with her.

He looked at them a second or so and then looked at Murdoch—at his wretched face and his hollow eyes. An unsavoury exclamation burst from him.

“What !” he cried out after it. “There's another man, is there ? Is it *that* ?”

“Yes,” was Murdoch's monotonous reply. “There's another man.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“EVEN.”

THE same evening M. Saint Méran had the pleasure of meeting an individual of whom he had heard much, and in whom he was greatly interested. This individual was the master of “Haworth’s,” who came in after dinner.

If he had found Murdoch a little trying and wearisome, M. Saint Méran found Haworth astounding. He was not at all prepared for him. When he walked into the room as if it were his own, gave a bare half-nod to French and carried himself aggressively to Miss Ffrench’s side, Saint Méran was transfixed with astonishment. He had heard faint rumours of something like this before, but had never dreamed of seeing it. He retreated within himself and occupied himself with a study of the manners and cha-

racteristics of the successful manufacturers of Great Britain.

“He is very large,” he said, with soft sarcasm, to Miss Ffrench. “Very large indeed.”

“That,” replied Miss Ffrench, “is probably the result of the iron trade.”

The truth was that he seemed to fill the room. The time had passed when he was ill at ease in the house. Now he was cool to defiance. Ffrench had never found him so embarrassing as he was upon this particular evening. He spoke very little, sitting in his chair silent, with a gloomy and brooding look. When he directed his attention upon any one, it was upon Rachel. The prolonged gaze which he occasionally fixed upon her was one of evil scrutiny, which stirred her usually cool blood not a little. She never failed, however, to meet it with composure. At last she did a daring thing. Under cover of a conversation between her father and Saint Méran, she went to the table at his side and began to turn over the books upon it.

“I think,” she said, in an undertone, “that you have something to say to me.”

“Ay,” he answered, “I have that; and the time’ll come when I shall say it too.”

“You think I am afraid to hear it,” she continued. “Follow me into the next room and see.”

Then she addressed her father, speaking aloud.

“Your plans for the new bank are in the next room, I believe,” she said. “I wish to show them to Mr. Haworth.”

“Y—yes,” he admitted, somewhat reluctantly.
“They are on my table.”

She passed through the folding doors, and Haworth followed her. She stopped at one of the windows and waited for him to speak, and it was during this moment in which she waited that he saw in her face what he had not seen before—a faint pallor and a change which was not so much a real change as the foreshadowing of one to come. He saw it now because it chanced that the light struck full upon her.

“Now,” she said, “say your say. But let me tell you that I shall listen not because I feel a shadow of interest in it, but because I *know* you thought I shrank from hearing it.”

He pushed open the French window and strode on to the terrace.

“Step out here,” he said.

She went out.

“This,” he said, glancing about him, “this is th' place you stood on th' night you showed yourself to the strikers.”

She made no answer.

“It's as good a place as any,” he went on. “I'm going,” with bitter significance, “to have it out with you.”

Then, for the first time, it struck her that she had overstepped the mark and done a dangerous thing, but she would have borne a great deal sooner than turn back, and so she remained.

“I've stood it a long time,” he said, “and now I'm going to reckon up. There's a good bit of reckoning up to be done betwixt you and me, for all you've held me at arm's length.”

“I am glad,” she put in, “that you acknowledge that I did hold you at arm's length, and that you were not blind to it.”

“Oh,” he answered, “I wasn't blind to it, no more than you were blind to the other; and

from first to last it's been my comfort to remember that you weren't blind to the other—that you knew it as well as I did. I've held to that."

He came close to her.

"When I give up what I'd worked twenty year to get, what did I give it up for? For *you*. When I took Ffrench in partner, what did I run the risk for? For *you*. What was to pay me? *You*."

His close presence in the shadow was so intolerable to her that she could have cried out, but she did not.

"You made a poor bargain," she remarked.

"Ay, a poor bargain; but you were one in it. You bore it in your mind, and you've bore it there from then till now, and I've got a hold on you through it that's worth summat to me, if I never eame nigh nor touched you. You knew it, and you let it be. No other chap can pay more for you than Jem Haworth's paid. I've got that to think of."

She made a gesture with her hand.

"I—I—hush!" she cried. "I will not hear it!"

“Stop it, if you can. Call 'em, if you want, and let 'em hear—th' new chap and all. You shall hear, if all Broxton comes. I've paid twenty-five year' of work and sweat and grime; I've paid 'Haworth's'—for I'm a ruined chap as I stand here; and but for *you* I'd have got through.”

There was a shock in these last words; if they were true the blow would fall on her too.

“What,” she faltered,—“what do you mean?”

“Th' strikes begun it,” he answered, laconically, “and he,” with a jerk of his thumb towards the room in which her father sat, “finished it. He tried some of his gentleman pranks in a quiet way, and he lost money on 'em. He's lost it again and again, and tried to cover it with fresh shifts, and it's 'Haworth's' that must pay for 'em. It'll come sooner or later, and you may make up your mind to it.”

“What were you doing?” she demanded, sharply. “You might have known——”

“Ay,” he returned, “what was I doing? I used to be a sharp chap enow. I've not been as sharp i' th' last twelve month, and he was up to

it. He thought it was his own brass, likely—he'd give summat for it as belonged to him.”

He came nearer to the light and eyed her over.

“You've had your day,” he said. “You've made a worse chap of me than I need have been. You—you lost me a friend; I hadn't counted that in. You've done worse by him than you've done by me. He was th' finer mak' of th' two, and it'll go harder with him. When I came in, he was hanging about the road-side, looking up at the house. He didn't see me, but I saw him. He'll be there many a night, I dare say. I'd be ready to swear he's there now.”

“Whom do you mean?”

“I mean—Murdoch!”

The very sound of his own voice seemed to fire him with rage. She saw a look in his eye which caused her to shrink back. But she was too late. He caught her by the arm and dragged her towards him.

A second later, when he released her, she staggered to one of the rustic seats and sank crouching into it, hiding her face in the folds of her dress. She had not cried out, however, or

uttered a sound, and he had known she would not.

He stood looking down at her.

“ A gentleman wouldn't have done it,” he said, hoarsely. “ I'm not a gentleman. You've held me off and trampled me under-foot. That'll leave us a bit even.”

And he turned on his heel and walked away into the darkness.

CHAPTER XV.

“WHY DO YOU CRY FOR ME ?”

WHEN he said that he had seen Murdoch standing in the road before the house, he had spoken the truth. It was also true that even as they stood upon the terrace he was there still.

He was there every night. Where he slept or when, or if at all, his mother and Christian did not know ; they only knew that he never spent a night at home. They barely saw him from day to day. When he came home in the morning and evening, it was to sit at the table, rarely speaking, scarcely tasting food, only drinking greedily the cup of strong coffee Christian always had in readiness for him. The girl was very good to him in these days. She watched him in terror of his unnatural mood. He hardly seemed to see them when they were in the room with him ; his eyes were hollow and burning bright ;

he grew thin and narrow-chested and stooped; his hands were unsteady when he lifted anything.

When she was alone, Christian said to herself again and again :

“He will die. There is no help for it. He will die—or worse.”

One morning she came down to find him lying on the sofa with closed eyes and such a deathly face that she almost cried out aloud. But she restrained herself and went into the kitchen as if to perform her usual tasks. Not long afterwards she returned, carrying a little tray with a cup of hot coffee upon it.

“Will you drink this for me ?” she said to him.

He opened his eyes a little impatiently, but he sat up and drank it.

“It's very good,” he said, as he fell back again into his old position, “but you mustn't put yourself to trouble for me.”

Afterwards the coffee was always ready for him when he came in, and he got into the habit of drinking it mechanically.

The books he had been accustomed to pore over at every leisure moment lay unopened. He neither touched nor looked at them.

The two women tried to live their lives as if nothing were happening. They studiously avoided questioning or appearing to observe him.

“We must not let him think that we talk of him,” Christian said.

She showed a wonderful gentleness and tact. Until long afterwards, Mrs. Murdoch scarcely knew what support and comfort she had in her. Her past life had planted in her a readiness to despair.

“He is like his father,” she said once. “He was like him as a child. He is very trusting and faithful, but when his belief is gone it is all over. He has given up as his father did before he died. He will not try to live.”

He did not try to live, but he did not think of death. He was too full of other morbid thoughts. He could not follow any idea far. A thousand of them came and went and in the end were as nothing.

“Why,” he kept saying to himself weakly and wearily,—“*why* was it? What had I done?

“It was a strange thing to choose me out of so many,” he said. “I was hardly worth it. To have chosen another man would have served her better.”

He did not know how the days passed at the Works. The men began to gaze at him askance and mutter to each other when he went by.

“Th' feyther went daft,” they said. “Is this chap goin' th' same way?”

It was only the look of his face which made them say so. It was not likely that he would make any outcry, and he got through his work one way or another. But the days were his dread. The nights, strange and dreadful though they might be, were better than the broad daylight, with the scores of hands about him and the clangour of hammers and whirr of machinery. He fell into the habit of going to the engine-room and standing staring at the engine, fascinated by it. Once he drew nearer and nearer with such a look in his eye that Floxham began to regard him stealthily. He went closer, pace by pace, and at

last made a step which brought a shout from Floxham, who sprang upon him and tore him away.

“What art at, tha foo’?” he yelled. “Does tha want to be takken whoam on a shutter?”

Wakening, as it were, with a long-drawn breath, “I forgot,” he said; “that was it. I was thinking of another thing.”

The time came at length when he had altered so that when he went out his mother and Christian often sat up together half the night trembling with a fear neither of them would have put into words. As they sat trying to talk, each would glance at the other stealthily, and when their eyes met, each would start as if with some guilty thought.

On one of the worst and most dreadful of nights, Christian suddenly arose from her seat crossed the hearth and threw herself upon her knees before her companion.

“I’m going out,” she said. “Don’t—don’t try to keep me.”

“It is midnight,” Mrs. Murdoch answered, “and—you don’t know where to go.”

“Yes,” the girl returned, “I do. For God's sake, let me go! I cannot bear it.”

The woman gave her a long look, and then said a strange and cruel thing.

“You had better stay where you are. It is not *you* he wants.”

“No,” bitterly, “it is not me he wants; but I can find him and make sure—that—that he will come back. And then you will go to sleep.”

She left her in spite of her efforts to detain her. She was utterly fearless, and went into the night as if there was no such thing as peril on earth.

She did know where to go, and went there. Murdoch was standing opposite the house in which Rachel Ffrench slept.

She went to him and put her hand on his arm.

“What are you doing here?” she said, in a low voice.

He turned and gave her a cold, vacant look. He did not seem at all surprised at finding her dark, beautiful young face at his very shoulder.

“I don't know exactly,” he said. “Can you tell me?”

“We have been waiting for you,” she said.
“We often wait for you. We cannot rest when
you are away.”

“Do you want me to go home and go to bed
decently and sleep ?” he said. “Do you suppose
I would not, if I could ? I always start from
here and come back here. I say to myself, ‘It
will take me an hour to reach the place where I
can see her window.’ It is something to hold
one’s mind in check with. This rambling—and
—and forgetting what one has meant to think
about is a terrible thing.”

“Come home with me,” she said. “We will
not talk. You can lie on the sofa and we will go
away. I want your mother to sleep.”

Something in her presence began to influence
him to a more sane mood.

“What are you doing here ?” he asked. “It
is midnight.”

“I am not afraid,” she answered. “I could
not bear to stay in the house. We sit there——”

An idea seemed to strike him suddenly. He
stopped her.

“Did you come,” he asked deliberately,

“ because you thought I might do myself harm ? ”

She would not answer, and after waiting a second or so he went on slowly :

“ I have thought I might myself—sometimes, but never for long. You have no need to fear. I am always stopped by the thought that—perhaps—it is not worth it after all. When things look clearer, I shall get over it. Yes—I think I shall get over it—though now there seems to be no end. But—some day—it will come—and I shall get over it. Don't be afraid that I shall do myself harm. If I am not killed—before the end comes—I shall not kill myself. I shall know it was not worth it after all.”

The tears had been running down her cheeks as she stood, but she bit her lip and forced herself to breathe evenly, so that he might not find her out. But just then, as he moved, a great drop fell upon the back of his hand. He stopped and held it still, as if in the darkness he was trying to look at it. He began to tremble.

“ Good God ! ” he cried. “ You are crying. Why do you cry for me ? ”

“Because I cannot help it,” she said, in a half-whisper. “I do not cry often. I never cried for any one before.”

He began to move slowly along at her side.

“I’ll take you home,” he said. “Don’t cry.”

CHAPTER XVI.

“IT IS WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.”

A week or so later Saint Méran went away. Ffrench informed his partner of this fact with a secret hope of its producing upon him a somewhat softening effect. But Haworth received the statement with coolness.

“He'll come back again,” he said. “Let him alone for that.”

The general impression was that he would return. The opinion most popular in the more humble walks of Broxton society was that he had gone “to get hisson ready an' ha' th' papers drawed up,” and that he would appear some fine day with an imposing rotinue, settle an enormous fortune upon Miss Ffrench, and, having been united to her with due grandeur and solemnity, would disappear with her to indefinitely “furrin” parts.

There seemed to be little change in Rachel Ffrench's life and manner, however. She began to pay rather more strict attention to her social duties, and consequently went out oftener. This might possibly be attributed to the fact that remaining indoors was somewhat dull. Haworth and Murdoch came no more, and after Saint Méran's departure a sort of silence seemed to fall upon the house. Ffrench himself felt it when he came in at night, and was naturally restless under it. Perhaps Miss Ffrench felt it too, though she did not say so.

One morning, Janey Briarley, sitting nursing the baby in the doorway of the cottage, glanced upward from her somewhat arduous task to find a tall and graceful figure standing before her in the sun. She had been too busily engaged to hear footsteps, and there had been no sound of carriage-wheels, so the visitor had come upon her entirely unawares.

It cannot be said she received her graciously. Her whilom admiration had been much tempered by sharp distrust very early in her acquaintance with its object.

“Art tha coomin' in?” she asked, unceremoniously.

“Yes,” said Rachel Ffrench, “I am coming in.”

Janey got up and made room for her to pass, and when she had passed, gave her a chair, very much over-weighted by the baby as she did so.

“Does tha want to see mother?” she inquired.

“If your mother is busy, you will serve every purpose. The housekeeper told me that Mrs. Dixon was ill, and as I was passing I thought I would come in.”

Janey's utter disbelief in this explanation was a sentiment not easily concealed, even by an adept at controlling facial expression, and she was not an adept. But Miss Ffrench was not at all embarrassed by any demonstration of a lack of faith which she might have perceived. When Janey resumed her seat, she broke the silence by an entirely unexpected observation. She touched the baby delicately with the point of her parasol —very delicately indeed.

“I suppose,” she remarked, “that this is an extremely handsome child.”

This with the air of one inquiring for information.

"Nay, he is na," retorted Janey, unrelentingly. "He's good enow, but he nivver wur hurt wi' good looks. None on 'em wur, an' he's fou'est o' th' lot. I should think tha could see that fur thysen."

"Oh," replied Miss Ffrench, "then I suppose I am wrong. My idea was that at that age children all looked alike."

"Loike him?" drily. "Did tha think as tha did?"

As the young Briarley in question was of a stolid and unornamental type, uncertain of feature, and noticeable chiefly for a large and unusually bald head of phrenological development, this gave the matter an entirely novel aspect.

"Perhaps," said Miss Ffrench, "I scarcely regarded it from that point of view."

Then she changed the subject.

"How," she inquired, "is Mrs. Dixon?"

"She's neyther better nor worse," was the answer, "an' a mort o' trouble."

“That is unfortunate. Who cares for her?”

“Mother. She’s th’ only one as can do owt wi’ her.”

“Is there no one else she has a fancy for? Your father, for instance?”

“She conna bide th’ soight o’ him, and he’s feart to go nigh her. Th’ ony man as she ivver looked at wur Murdoch.”

“I think I remember his saying she had made friends with him. Is she as fond of him now?”

“I dunnot know as I could ca’ it bein’ fond on him. She is na fond o’ noboddy. But she says he’s getten a bit more sense than th’ common run.”

“It is rather good-natured on his part to come to see her——”

“He does na coom to see her. He has na been nigh th’ house fur a month. He’s been ill hissen or summat. He’s up an’ about, but he’d getten a face loike Death th’ last toime I seed him. Happen he’s goin’ off loike his feyther.”

“How is that?”

“Did na tha know,” with some impatience, “as he went crazy over summat he wur makin’,

an' deed 'cause he could na mak' out to finish it ?
It's th' very thing Murdoch took up hissen an'
th' stroikers wur so set ag'in."

"I think I remember. There was a story
about the father. Do you—think he is really
ill ?"

"Murdoch ? ay, I do. Mak' less noise,
Tummos Henry !" (This to the child.)

"That is a great pity. There," rising from
her seat, "is the carriage."

One of her gloves had been lying upon her lap.
When she stood up, it dropped. She bent to pick
it up, and as she did so something fell tinkling
upon the flag floor and rolled under a table.
It was one of her rings. Janey brought it
back to her.

"It mun ha' been too large for thee," she said,
"or tha'rt gettin' thin. Seems loike tha'rt a
bit different to what tha wur," with a glance at
her.

"Never mind that," sharply, as she handed
her some money. "Give this to your
mother."

And she dropped the ring into her purse

instead of putting it on again, and went out to her carriage.

Janey stood and watched her.

“She is a bit thinner, or summat,” she remarked, “but she need na moind that. It’s genteel enow to be thin, and I dunnot know as it ud hurt her.”

Rachel Ffrench went home, and the same afternoon Murdoch came to her for the last time.

He had not intended to come. In his wildest moments he had never thought of going to her again, but as he passed along the road, intending to spend the afternoon in wandering across the country, he looked up at the windows of the house and a strange fancy seized upon him. He would go in and ask her the question he had asked himself again and again. It did not seem to him at the time a strange thing to do. It looked wonderfully simple and natural in his strained and unnatural mood. He turned in at the gate with only one feeling—that perhaps she would tell him, and then it would be over. She saw him come up the path, and wondered

if the man at the door would remember the charge she had given him. It chanced that he did not remember, or that he was thrown off his guard. She heard feet on the stairs in a few seconds, and almost immediately Murdoch was in the room. What she thought when, being brought thus near to him, she saw and recognised the dreadful change in him, God knows. She supported herself with her hand upon the back of her chair when she rose. There was a look in his face almost wolfish. He would not sit down, and in three minutes broke through the barrier of her effort at controlling him. It was impossible for her to control him as she might have controlled another man.

"I have only a few words to say," he said. "I have come to ask you a question. I think that is all—only to ask you a question. Will you tell me," he said, "what wrong I have done you?"

She put her other hand on the chair and held it firmly.

"Will you tell me," she said, almost in a whisper, "what wrong I have done *you*?"

She remained so looking at him and he at her with a terrible helplessness through a moment of dead silence.

She dropped her face upon her hands as she held the chair, and so stood.

He fell back a pace, gazing at her still.

“I have heard of women who fancied themselves injured,” he said, “planning to revenge themselves upon the men who had intentionally or unintentionally wounded their pride. I remember such things in books I have read, not in real life, and once or twice the thought has crossed my mind that at some time in the past I might, in my poor ignorance, have presumed — or — or blundered in some way to — anger you — and that this has been my punishment. It is only a wild thought, but it was a straw to cling to, and I would rather believe it, wild as it is, than believe that what you have done you did wantonly. Can it be — is it true ?”

“No.”

But she did not lift her face.

“It is not ?”

"No."

"Then it is worse than I thought."

He said the words slowly and clearly, and they were his last. Having said them he went away without a backward glance.

CHAPTER XVII.

ONCE AGAIN.

IN half an hour's time he had left Broxton far behind him. He left the open road and rambled across fields and through lanes. The people in the farm-houses, who knew him, saw him pass looking straight before him and walking steadily like a man with an end in view.

His mind was full of one purpose—the determination to control himself and keep his brain clear.

“ *Now*,” he said, “ let me think it over—now let me look at it in cold blood.”

The effort he made was something gigantic ; it was a matter of physical as well as mental force. He had wavered and been vague long enough. Now the time had come to rouse himself through sheer power of will, or give up the reins and drift with the current a lost man.

At dusk he reached Dillup, and roamed about the streets, half conscious of his surroundings. The Saturday-night shopping was going on, and squalid women hurrying past him with their baskets on their arms glanced up, wondering at his dark face and preoccupied air.

"He's noan Dillup," they said; one good woman going so far as to add that "she did na loike th' looks on him neyther," with various observations upon the moral character of foreigners in general. He saw nothing of the sensation he created, however. He rambled about erratically until he felt the need of rest, and then went into a clean little shop and bought some simple food and ate it, sitting upon the tall stool before the counter, watched by the stout, white-aproned matron in charge.

"Tha looks poorly, mester," she said, as she handed him his change.

He started a little on hearing her voice, but recovered himself readily.

"Oh no," he said. "I'm right enough, I think. I'm an American, and I suppose we are rather a gaunt-looking lot as a rule."

“ ‘Merikin, art tha ?” she replied. “ Well, to be sure ! Happen that's it,” good-naturedly. “ I've allus heerd they wur a poor colour. ‘Merikin ! Well—sure-*ly* !”

The fact of his being an American seemed to impress her deeply. She received his thanks (she was not often thanked by her customers) as a mysterious though not disagreeable result of his nationality, and as he closed the door after him he heard, as an accompaniment to the tinkling of the shop-bell, her amiably surprised ejaculation again, “ A ‘Merikin ! Well—surely !”

A few miles from Brockton there was a substantial little stone bridge upon which he had often sat. In passing it again and again it had gradually become a sort of resting-place for him. It was at a quiet point of the road, and sitting upon it he had thought out many a problem. When he reached it on his way back he stopped and took his usual seat, looking down into the slow little stream beneath, and resting against the low buttress. He had not come to work out a problem now ; he felt that he had worked his problem out in the past six hours.

"It was not worth it," he said. "No—it was not worth it after all."

When he went on his way again he was very tired, and he wondered drearily whether, if when he came near the old miserable stopping-place, he should not falter and feel the fascination strong upon him again. He had an annoying fear of the mere possibility of such a thing. When he saw the light striking slantwise upon the trees it might draw him towards it as it had done so often before—even in spite of his determination and struggles.

Half a mile above the house a great heat ran over him and then a deadly chill, but he went on steadily. There was this for him, that for the first time he could think clearly and not lose himself.

He came nearer to it and nearer, and it grew in brightness. He fancied he had never seen it so bright before. He looked up at it and then away. He was glad that having once looked he could turn away; there had been many a night when he could not. Then he was under the shadow of the trees and knew that his dread had

been only a fancy, and that he was a saner man than he had thought. And the light was left behind him and he did not look back, but went on.

When he reached home the house was utterly silent. He entered with his latch-key, and finding all dark went upstairs noiselessly.

The door of his own room was closed, and when he opened it he found darkness there also. He struck a match and turned on the light. For a moment its sudden glare blinded him, and then he turned involuntarily toward the farther corner of the room. Why he did so, he did not know at the time—the movement was the result of an uncontrollable impulse—but after he had looked he knew.

The light shone upon the empty chair in its old place—and upon the table and upon the model standing on it !

He did not utter any exclamation ; strangely enough, he did not at first feel any shock or surprise. He advanced towards it slowly. But when at last he stood near it, the shock came. His heart beat as if it would burst.

"What falseness is there in me," he cried,
"that I should have *forgotten* it?"

He was stricken with burning shame. He did not ask himself how it was that it stood there in its place. He thought of nothing but the lack in himself which was so deep a humiliation. Everything else was swept away. He sank into the chair and sat staring at it.

"I had forgotten it," he said—"forgotten it."

And then he put out his hand and touched and moved it—and drew it towards him.

About an hour afterwards he was obliged to go downstairs for something he needed. It was to the sitting-room he went, and when he pushed the door open he found a dim light burning and saw that some'one was lying upon the sofa. His first thought was that it was his mother who had waited for him, but it was not she—it was Christian Murdoch fast asleep with her face upon her arm.

Her hat and gloves were thrown upon the table, and she still wore a long gray cloak which was stained and damp about the hem. He saw

this as soon as he saw her face, and no sooner saw than he understood.

He went to the sofa and stood a moment looking down at her, and, though he did not speak or stir, she awakened.

She sat up and pushed her cloak aside, and he spoke to her.

“It was you who brought it back,” he said.

“Yes,” she answered, quietly. “I thought that if you saw it in the old place again you would remember.”

“*You* did not forget it.”

“I had nothing else to think of,” was her simple reply.

“I must seem a poor sort of fellow to you,” he said, wearily. “I *am* a poor sort of fellow.”

“No,” she said, “or I should not have thought it worth while to bring it back.”

He glanced down at her dress and then up at her face.

“You had better go upstairs to bed,” he said. “The dew has made your dress and cloak damp. Thank you for what you have done.”

She got up and turned away.

“Good night,” she said.

“Good night,” he answered, and watched her out of the room.

Then he found what he required and went back to his work; only, more than once as he bent over it, he thought again of the innocent look of her face as it rested upon her arm when she slept.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FOOTSTEP.

HE went out no more at night. From the moment he laid his hand upon the model again he was safer than he knew. Gradually the old fascination reasserted itself. There were hours of lassitude and weariness to be borne, and moments of unutterable bitterness and disgust for life, in which he had to fight sharp battles against the poorer side of his nature ; but always at the worst there was something which made itself a point to fix thought upon. He could force himself to think of this when, if he had had no purpose in view, he would have been a lost man. The keen sense of treachery to his own resolve stung him, but it was a spur after all. The strength of the reaction had its physical effect upon him, and sometimes he suddenly found himself weak to exhaustion—so weak that

any exertion was impossible, and he was obliged to leave his post at the Works and return home for rest. At such time he lay for hours upon the narrow sofa in the dull little room, as his father had done long before, and wore a look so like him that, one day, his mother coming into the room not knowing he was there, cried out aloud and staggered backward, clutching at her breast.

Her manner towards him softened greatly in these days. It was more what it had been in his boyhood, when she had watched over him with patient and unfailing fondness. Once he awakened to see her standing a few paces from his side, seeming to have been there some moments.

“ If—I have seemed hard to you in your trouble,” she said, “ forgive me.”

She spoke without any prelude, and did not seem to expect any answer, turning away and going about her work at once ; but he felt that he need feel restless and chilled in her presence no longer.

He did not pursue his task at home, but took the model down to the Works and found a place for it in his little work-cell.

The day he did so he was favoured by a visit from Haworth. It was the first since the rupture between them. Since then they had worked day after day with only the door separating. They had known each other's incomings and outgoings, but had been as far apart as if a world had separated them. Haworth had known more of Murdoch than Murdoch had known of him. No change in him had escaped his eye. He had seen him struggle and reach his climax at last. He had jeered at him as a poor enough fellow with fine, white-livered fancies, and a woman's way of bearing himself. He had raged at and cursed him, and now and then been lost in wonder at him, but he had never fathomed him from first to last.

But within the last few weeks his mood had changed—slowly, it is true, but it had changed. His bearing had changed too. Murdoch himself gradually awakened to a recognition of this fact, in no small wonder. He was less dogged and aggressive, and showed less ill-will.

That he should appear suddenly, almost in his old way, was a somewhat startling state of affairs, but he crossed the threshold coolly.

He sat down and folded his arms on the table.

" You brought summat down with you this morning," he said. " What was it ? "

Murdoch pointed to the wooden case, which stood on a shelf a few feet from him.

" It was that," he answered.

" That ! " he repeated. " What ! You're at work at it again, are you ? "

" Yes."

" Well, look sharp after it, that's all. There's a grudge bore again it."

" I know that," Murdoch answered, " to my cost. I brought it here because I thought it would be safer."

" Ay, it'll be safer. Take my advice and keep it close, and work at it at nights, when th' place is quiet. There's a key as'll let you in." And he flung a key down upon the table.

Murdoch picked it up mechanically. He felt as if he could scarcely be awake. It seemed as if the man must have brought his purpose into the room with him, having thought it over beforehand. His manner by no means disarmed the suspicion.

“It is the favour I should have asked, if I had thought——”

Haworth left his chair.

“There's th' key,” he said, abruptly. “Use it. No other chap would get it.”

He went back to his own room again, and Murdoch was left to his surprise, which was a strong emotion.

He finished his work for the day and went home, remaining there until night came on. Then he went back to the Works, having first told Christian of his purpose.

“I am going to the Works,” he said. “I may be there all night. Don't wait for me, or feel anxious.”

When the great building loomed up before him in the dark, his mind recalled instantly the night he had entered it before, attracted by the light in the window. There was no light about it now but that shut in the lantern he carried. The immensity and dead stillness would have been a trying thing for many a man to encounter, but as he relocked the door and made his way to his den, he thought of them only from one point of view.

"It is the silence of the grave," he said. "A man can concentrate himself upon his work as if there was not a human breath stirring within a mile of him."

Somehow, even his room wore a look which seemed to belong to the silence of night—a look he felt he had not seen before. He marked it with a vague sense of mystery when he set his lantern down upon the table, turning the light only upon the spot on which his work would stand.

Then he took down the case and opened it, and removed the model.

"It will not be forgotten again," he thought aloud. "If it is to be finished, it will be finished here."

Half the night passed before he returned home. When he did so he went to his room and slept heavily until daylight. He had never slept as he slept in these nights—heavy, dreamless sleep, from which, at first, he used to awaken with a start and a perfectly blank sense of loss and dread, but which became, at last, unbroken.

Night after night found him at his labour. It grew upon him ; he longed for it through the day; he could not have broken from it if he would.

Once, as he sat at his table, he fancied that he heard a lock click, and afterwards a stealthy foot-step. It was a sound so faint and indistinct that his disbelief in its reality was immediate; but he got up, taking his lantern with him, and went out to look at the entrance passage. It was empty and dark, and the door was shut and locked as he had left it. He went back to his work little disturbed. He had not really expected to find the traces of any presence in the place, but he had felt it best to make the matter safe.

Perhaps the fact that once or twice on other nights the same light, indefinite sound fell upon his ear again, made him feel rather more secure than otherwise. Having examined the place before and with the same result, it troubled him no more. He set it down to some ordinary material cause.

After his first visit Haworth came into his room often. Why he came Murdoch did not understand very clearly. He did not come to

talk ; sometimes he scarcely spoke at all. He was moody and abstracted. He went about the place wearing a hard and reckless look, utterly unlike any roughness and hardness he had shown before. The hands who had cared the least for his not altogether ill-natured tempests in days gone by, shrank or were restive before him now. He drove all before him or passed through the rooms sullenly. It was plain to see that he was not the man he had been—that he had even lost strength, and was suddenly worn and broken, though neither flesh nor colour had failed him.

Among those who had made a lion of him he was more popular than ever. The fact that he had held out against ill luck when so many had gone down was constantly quoted. The strikes which had kept up an uneven but prolonged struggle had been the ruin of many a manufacturer who had thought he could battle any storm. “Haworth’s” had held its own and weathered the worst.

This was what the county potentates were fond of saying upon all occasions,—particularly when they wanted Haworth to dine with them

at their houses. He used to accept their invitations and then go and sit at their dinner-tables with a sardonic face. His humour, it was remarked with some regret, was often of a sardonic kind. Occasionally he laughed at the wrong time, and his jokes were not always easy to smile under. It was also remarked that Mr. Ffrench scarcely seemed comfortable upon these festive occasions. Of late he had not been in the enjoyment of good health. He explained that he suffered from nervous headaches and depression. His refined, well-moulded face had become rather thin and fatigued-looking. He had lost his effusive eloquence. He often sat silent, and started nervously when spoken to, but he did not eschew society at all, always going out upon any state occasion when his partner was to be a feature of the feast. The fact was that once upon such an occasion he had said privately and with some plaintiveness to Haworth—

“I don't think I can go to-night, my dear fellow. I really don't feel quite equal to it.”

“Damn you!” said Haworth, dispensing with social codes. “You'll go whether you're up to it

or not. We'll keep it up to the end. It'll be over soon enough."

He evinced interest in the model, in his visits to the work-room, which seemed a little singular to Murdoch. He asked questions about it, and more than once repeated his caution concerning its being "kept close."

"I've got it into my head that you'll finish it some of these days," he said once, "if naught happens to it or you."

CHAPTER XIX.

FINISHED.

ONE night, Murdoch, on leaving the house, said to Christian—

“ Don't expect me until morning. I may not be back until then. I think I shall work all night.”

She did not ask him why. For several days she had seen that a singular mood was upon him, that he was restless. Sometimes when he met her eye unexpectedly, he started and coloured and turned away, as if he was a little afraid. She stood upon the step and watched him until he disappeared in the darkness, and then shut the door and went in to his mother.

A quarter of an hour afterwards he entered his work-room, and shut himself in and brought out the model.

He sat looking at it a moment, and then

stretched forth his hand to touch it. Suddenly he drew it back and let it fall heavily upon the table.

“Good God!” he cried. “Did *he* ever feel so near as *this*, and then fail?”

The shock was almost unbearable.

“Are there to be two of us?” he said. “Was not one enough?”

But he put forth his hand again a minute later, though his heart beat like a trip-hammer.

“It rests with me to prove it,” he said—“with *me!*”

As he worked, the dead silence about him seemed to become more intense. His own breathing was a distinct sound, light as it was; the accidental dropping of a tool upon the table was a jar upon him; the tolling of the church bell at midnight was unbearable. He even took out his watch and stopped it. But at length he knew neither sound nor stillness; he forgot both.

It had been a dark night, but the morning rose bright and clear. The sun, streaming in at

the one window, fell upon the model, pushed far back upon the table, and on Murdoch himself, sitting with his forehead resting upon his hands. He had been sitting thus some time—he did not know how long. He had laid his last tool down before the first streak of pink had struck across the gray sky.

He was tired, and chill with the morning air, but he had not thought of going home yet, or even quite recognised that the night was past. His lantern still burned beside him.

But he was roused at last by a sound in the outer room. The gates had not been unlocked nor the bell rung, but some one had come in.

Haworth the next moment opened the door, and stood in the threshold, looking in on him.

“You've been here all night,” he said.

“Yes,” Murdoch answered.

He turned a little and pointed to the model, speaking slowly, as if he were but half awake.

“I think,” he said, “that it is complete.”

He said it with so little appearance of emotion or exultation that Haworth was dumbfounded.

He laid a hand on his shoulder and shook him a little.

"Wake up, man!" he said. "You're dazed."

"No," he answered, "not dazed. I've had time to think it over. It has been finished two or three hours."

All at once he burst into a laugh.

"I did not think," he said, "that it would be you I should tell the news to first."

Haworth sat down near him with a dogged face.

"Nay," he replied, "nor me either."

They sat and stared at each other for a moment in silence.

Then Murdoch drew a long, wearied breath.

"But it is done," he said, "nevertheless."

After that he got up and began to make his preparations to go home, while Haworth sat and watched him.

"I shall want to go away," he said. "When I come back I shall know what the result is to be."

"Start to-morrow morning," said Haworth.

“And keep close. By the time you come back——”

He stopped, and left his chair, and the bell which called the hands to work began its hurried clanging.

At the door he paused.

“When shall you take it away?” he asked.

“To-night,” Murdoch answered. “After dark.”

At home he only told them one thing—that in the morning he was going to London and did not know when he should return.

He did not return to the Works during the day, but remained at home trying to rest. But he could not sleep, and the day seemed to lag heavily. In the afternoon he left the sofa on which he had lain through the morning and went out. He walked slowly through the town and at last turned down the lane which led to the Briarleys' cottage. He felt as if there would be a sort of relief to the tenseness of his mood in a brief interview with Janey. He had often found Janey an excellent antidote to visionary and ill-balanced moods. When he went into the house, Mr. Briarley was seated in Mrs. Dixon's chair

unscientifically balancing his latest born upon his knee. His aspect was grave and absorbed ; he was heated and dishevelled with violent exertion ; the knot of his blue cotton neckerchief had twisted itself under his right ear in a painfully suggestive manner. Under some stress of circumstances he had been suddenly pressed into service, and his mode of placating his offspring was at once unprofessional and productive of frantic excitement.

But the moment he caught sight of Murdoch an alarming change came upon him. His eyes opened to their fullest extent, his jaw fell, and the colour died out of his face. He rose hurriedly, dropped the youngest Briarley into his chair and darted out of the house, in such trepidation that his feet slipped under him when he reached the lower step, and he fell with a loud clatter of wooden clogs, scrambled up again with haste and difficulty, and disappeared at once.

Attracted by the disturbance, Janey darted in from the inner room, barely in time to rescue the deserted young Briarley from certain and dire catastrophe.

“ Wheer's he gone ?” she demanded with rancour, signifying her paternal parent. “ I towd her he wur na fit to be trusted ! Wheer's he gone ?”

“ I don't know,” Murdoch answered. “ I think he ran away because he saw me. What is the trouble ?”

“ Nay, dunnot ax me ! We canna mak' him out, neyther mother nor me. He's been settin' i' th' house fur three days, as if he wur feart to stir out—settin' by th' fire an' shakin' his yed, an' cryin' ivvery now and then. An' here's her i' th' back room to wait on. A noice toime this is fur him to pick to go off in. He mowt ha' waited till she wur done wi'.”

“ So he might,” said Murdoch, seriously.

But as conversation naturally could not flourish under the circumstances, he only remained a few minutes and then took his leave.

It seemed that he had not yet done with Mr. Briarley. Passing through the gate, he caught sight of a forlorn figure seated upon the roadside about twenty yards before him. It was a well-known figure, wearing a fustian jacket and

a blue neckcloth knotted under the ear. As he approached, Mr. Briarley looked up, keeping his eyes fixed upon him in a despairing gaze. He did not remove his glance at all, in fact, until Murdoch was within ten feet of him, when, for some entirely inexplicable reason, he rose hurriedly and passed to the other side of the road, and at a distance of some yards ahead, sat down, and stared wildly at him again. This singular course he pursued until they had reached the end of the lane, where he did not leave his place, but sat and watched Murdoch out of sight.

"I thowt," he said, breathing with extreme shortness, "as he ha' done fur me. It wur a wonder as he did na. If I'd coom nigh him or he'd coom nigh me, they'd ha' swore it wur me as did it an's gone accordin', if luck went ag'in 'em."

Then a sudden panic seemed to seize him. He pulled off his cap, and, holding it in both hands, stared into it, as if in desperate protestation against fate. A large tear fell into the crown, and then another and another.

"I canna help it," he said, in a sepulchral and

very loud whisper. “Look out! Look out!
Look out!”

And then, probably feeling that even in this he might be committing himself fatally, he got up, glanced fearfully about him, and scuttled away.

CHAPTER XX.

"IF AUGHT'S FOR ME, REMEMBER IT."

BEFORE he left the house at night, Murdoch had a brief interview with his mother.

"I am going to London as *he* went," he said,— "on the same errand. The end may be what it was before. I have felt very sure—but he was sure too."

"Yes," the woman answered, "he was very sure."

"I don't ask you to trust it—or me," he said. "He gave a life to it. I have not given a year, and he was the better man, a thousand-fold. I," with a shadow falling on his face, "have not proved myself as he did. He never faltered from the first."

"No," she said. "Would to God he had!"

But when he went, she followed him to the door and said the words she had refused him

when he had first told her he had taken the burden upon his shoulders.

“God speed you!” she said. “I will try to believe.”

His plan was to go to his room, pack his case securely, and then carry it with him to the station in time to meet the late train he had decided on taking.

He let himself into the Works as usual, and found his way along the passage in the darkness, though he carried his lantern. He knew his way so well that he did not need it there.

But when he reached Haworth's room and put out his hand to open the door, he stopped. His touch met no resistance, for the door was wide open.

The discovery was so sharp a shock to him that for a few seconds he remained motionless.

But he recovered himself in a second or so more. It might have been the result of carelessness, after all; so he turned on his light and went into his cell and began his task.

It did not take him long. When he had finished, the wooden case was simply a solid

square brown parcel which might have contained anything. He glanced at his watch and sat down a minute or so.

"There is no use in going too early," he said. And so he waited a little, thinking mechanically of the silence inside and the darkness out, and of the journey which lay before him. But at last he got up again and took his burden by the cord he had fastened about it.

"Now," he said, "it is time."

And at the very moment the words left his lips there was a sound outside the door, a rush upon him, he was seized by the throat, flung backward into the chair he had left, and held there. He made no outcry. His first thought when he found himself clutched and overpowered was an incongruous one of Briarley sitting on the roadside and looking up at him in panic-stricken appeal. He understood in a flash what his terror had meant.

The fellow who held him by the collar—there were three of them, and one was Reddy—shook him roughly.

"Wheer is it?" he said. "You know whatten we've coom for, my lad."

Murdoch was conscious of a little chill which passed over him, but otherwise he could only wonder at his own lack of excitement. No better place to finish a man than such a one as this at dead of night, and there was not one of the three who had not evil in his eye, but he spoke without a tremor in his voice,—with the calmness of being utterly without stay or help.

“ Yes, I suppose I know,” he said. “ You came to me for it before. What are you going to do with it ? ”

“ Smash it to h——,” concisely, “ an' thee too.”

It was not a pleasant thing to hear by the half-light of a lantern and the place so deadly still. Murdoch felt the little chill again, but he remembered that after all he had one slender chance if he could make them listen.

“ You are making a blunder,” he began. Reddy stopped him by addressing his comrades.

“ What art tha stondin' hearkenin' to him fur ? ” he demanded. “ Smack him i' th' mouth an' stop him.”

Murdoch gave a lurch forward which it gave

his captor some trouble to restrain. He turned dangerously white and his eye blazed.

"If you do, you devil," he panted, "I'll murder you."

"Wheer is th' thing we coom fur ?" said the first man. And then he caught sight of the package, which had fallen upon the floor.

"Happen it's i' theer," he suggested. "Oppen it, chaps."

Then all at once Murdoch's calmness was gone. He shook in their grasp.

"For God's sake !" he cried, "don't touch it ! Don't do it a harm ! It's a mistake. It has nothing to do with your trade. It would be no hurt to you if it were known to the whole world. For God's sake, believe me !"

"We've heerd a different mak' o' tale fro' that," said Reddy, laughing.

"It's a lie !—a lie ! Who told it ?"

"Jem Haworth," he was answered. "Jem Haworth, as it wur made fur."

He began to struggle with all his strength. He cried out aloud and sprang up and broke loose and fought with the force of madness.

“ You shall pay for it,” he shrieked, and three to one as they were, he held them for a moment at bay.

“ Gi' him th' knob-stick !” cried one. “ At him wi' it !”

It was Reddy who aimed the blow at him,—a blow that would have laid him a dead man among them,—but it never fell, for he sprang forward with a mighty effort and struck the bludgeon upward, and as it fell with a crash at the opposite side of the room, they heard, even above the tumult of their struggle, a rush of heavy feet, a voice every man among them knew, and the sound they most dreaded—the sharp report of a pistol.

“ It's Haworth !” they shouted. “ Haworth !” And they made a dash at the door in a body, stumbling over each other, striking and cursing, and the scoundrel who first got through and away was counted a lucky man.

Murdoch took a step forward and fell—so close to the model that his helpless hand touched it as it lay.

It was not long before he returned to conscious-

ness. His sudden loss of strength had only been a sort of climax body and mind had reached together. When he opened his eyes again, his first thought was a wonder at himself and a vague effort to comprehend his weakness. He looked up at Haworth, who bent over him.

"Lie still a bit, lad," he heard him say. "Lie and rest thee."

He no sooner heard his voice than he forgot his weak wonder at himself in a stronger wonder at him. He was ashen pale and a tremor shook him as he spoke.

"Lie still and rest thee," he repeated, and he touched his head with an approach at gentleness.

"They thought there was more than me," he said. "And they're not fond of powder and lead. They're better used to knob-sticks and vitriol in the dark."

"They meant," said Murdoch, "to murder me."

"Ay, make sure o' that. They weren't for play. They've had their minds on this for a month or two. If I'd been a minute later——"

He did not finish. A queer spasm of the throat stopped him.

He rose the next instant and struck a match and turned the gas on to full blaze.

“ Let's have light,” he said. “ Theer's a look about the place I can't stand.”

His eyes were bloodshot, his face looked gray and deeply lined and his lips were parched. There was a new haggardness upon him, and he was conscious of it and tried to bear it down with his old bravado.

“ They'll not come back,” he said. “ They've had enough for to-night. If they'd known I was alone they'd have made a stand for it. They think they were in luck to get off.”

He came back and sat down.

“ They laid their plans better than I thought,” he added. “ They got over me for once, devil take 'em. How art tha now, lad ? ”

Murdoch made the effort to rise and succeeded, though he was not very strong upon his feet, and sank into a chair feeling a little irritated at his own weakness.

“ Giddy,” he answered, “ and a trifle faint.

It's a queer business. I went down as if I'd been shot."

"I have an hour and a half to steady myself before the next train comes in. Let me make the best of it."

"You'll go to-night?" said Haworth.

"There's a stronger reason than ever that I should go," he answered. "Let me get it out of the way and safe, for heaven's sake!"

Haworth squared his arms upon the table and leaned on them.

"Then," he said, "I've got an hour and a half to make a clean breast of it."

He said it almost with a swagger, and yet his voice was hoarse, and his coolness a miserable pretence.

"Ask me," he said, "how I came here!"

And not waiting for a reply even while Murdoch gazed at him bewildered, he answered the question himself.

"I come," he said, "for a good reason,—for the same reason that's brought me here every night you've been at work?"

Murdoch repeated his last words mechani-

cally. He was not quite sure the man was himself.

“ Every night I've been at work ?”

“ Ay, every one on' em ! There's not been a night I've not been nigh you and ready.”

A memory flashed across Murdoch's mind with startling force.

“ It was you I heard come in ?” he cried. “ It was not fancy ?”

“ Ay, it was me.”

There was a moment's silence between them in which Murdoch thought with feverish rapidity.

“ It was you,” he said with some bitterness at last,—“ *you* who set the plot on foot ?”

“ Ay, it was me.

“ I could have done the job I wanted to do in a quicker way,” he went on, after a second's pause, “ but that wasn't my humour. I'd a mind to keep out of it myself, and I knew how to set the chaps on as would do it in their own way.”

“ What do you mean by ‘it’ ?” cried Murdoch. “ Were you devil enough to mean to have my blood ?”

"Ay,—while I was in the humour,—that and worse."

Murdoch sprang up and began to pace the room. His strength had come back to him with the fierce sense of repulsion which seized him.

"It's a blacker world than I thought," he said.
"We were friends once—friends!"

"So we were," hoarsely. "You were the first chap I ever made friends with, and you'll be the last. It's brought no good to either of us."

"It might," returned Murdoch, "if—"

"Let me finish my tale," even doggedly. "I said to myself before I came you should hear it. I swore I'd stop at naught, and I kept my word. I sowed a seed here and there, and th' soil was just right for it. They were in the mood to hearken to aught, and they hearkened. But there came a time when I found out that things were worse with you than with me and had gone harder with you. If you'd won where I lost it would have been different, but you lost most of the two—you'd the most to lose—and I changed my mind."

He stopped a second and looked at Murdoch,

who had come back and thrown himself into his chair again.

“ I've said many a time that you were a queer chap,” he went on, as if half dubious of himself. “ You *are* a queer chap. At th' start you got a hold on me, and when I changed my mind you got a hold on me again. I swore I'd undo what I'd done, if I could. I knew if the thing was finished and you got away with it they'd soon find out it was naught they need fret about, so I swore to see you safe through. I gave you the keys to come here to work, and every night I came and waited until you'd done and gone away. I brought my pistols with me and kept a sharp look-out. To-night I was late and they'd laid their plans and got here before me. There's th' beginning and there's th' end.”

“ You've saved my life,” said Murdoch. “ Let me remember that.”

“ I changed my mind and swore to undo what I'd done. There's naught for me in that, my lad, and plenty to go again me.”

After a little he pushed his chair back.

“ The time's not up,” he said. “ I've made

short work of it. Pick up thy traps and we'll go over the place together and see that it's safe."

He led the way carrying the lantern, and Murdoch followed him. They went from one end of the place to the other and found all quiet, only that the bars of a small lower window had been filed and wrenched out of place, Mr. Reddy and his friends having made their entrance through it.

"They've been on the look-out many a night before they made up their minds," said Haworth. "And they chose the right place to try."

Afterward they went out together, locking the door and iron gates behind them, and went down in company to the dark little station with its dim twinkling lights.

Naturally they did not talk very freely. Now and then there was a blank silence of many minutes between them.

But at last the train thundered its way in and stopped, and there was a feeble bustling to and fro among the sleepy officials and an opening and shutting and locking of doors.

When Murdoch got into his empty compart-

ment, Haworth stood at its step. At the very last he spoke in a strange hurry :

“When you come back,” he said, “when you come back—perhaps—”

There was a porter passing with a lantern which struck upon his face and showed it plainly. He shrank back a moment as if he feared it. But when it was gone he drew near again and spoke through the window.

“If there's aught in what's gone by that's for me,” he said, “remember it.”

And with a gesture of farewell, turned away and was gone.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN AFTER-DINNER SPEECH.

At dinner the next evening Mr. Ffrench had a story to tell. It was the rather exciting story of the completion of Murdoch's labour, the night attack, and his sudden departure. Exciting as it was, however, Mr. Ffrench did not relate it in his most vivid manner. His nervous ailments had increased of late, and he was not in a condition to be vivacious and dramatic. The incident came from him rather tamely, upon the whole.

"If it is the success he thinks it is," he terminated, "he is a made man—and he is not the fellow to deceive himself. Well," rather drearily, "I have said it would be so."

As Haworth had foreseen, Saint Méran appeared upon the scene again. He was present when the story was told, and was much interested in it as a dramatic incident bringing the peculiarities of

the manufacturing class of Broxton into strong play.

“If they had murdered him,” he remarked with critical niceness, “it would have been the most tragic of tragedies. On the very eve of his life's success. A tragedy indeed! And it is not bad either that it should have been his master who saved him.”

“Why do you say master?” said Miss Ffrench coldly.

“Pardon me. I thought——”

Mr. Ffrench interposed in some hurry.

“Oh, he has always been such an uncommon young fellow that we have scarcely thought of him as a servant. He has not been exactly a servant in fact.”

“Ah!” replied Saint Méran. “I ask pardon again.”

He had been not a little bewildered at the change he found in the household. Mr. Ffrench no longer expounded his views at length with refined vigour. He frequently excused himself from the family circle on plea of severe indisposition, and at other times he sat in singular and

depressing silence. He was evidently ill ; there were lines upon his forehead and circles about his eyes ; he had a perturbed air and started without any apparent cause. A change showed itself in Miss Ffrench also—so subtle as not to be easily described. It was a change which was not pallor nor fragility. It was an alteration which baffled him and yet forced him to recognise its presence constantly, and endeavour to comprehend it. Ffrench himself had seen it and pondered over it in secret. When he sat in his private room at the bank, bewildered and terrified even by the mere effort to think and face the future, his burden was not a little increased by his remembrance of his hours at home. More than all the rest he shrank from the day of reckoning with his daughter. He had confronted Haworth and borne the worst of his wrath. The account of himself which he must render to her would be the most scathing ordeal of his life.

“ Some women would pity me,” he said to himself, “ but she will not.”

Truth to tell, he looked forward pathetically to the possibility that hereafter their paths

might lie apart. Fate had saved him one fearful responsibility, at least. Her private fortune had been beyond his reach, and she would still be a rich woman even when the worst came. He could live on very little, he told himself, and there was always some hope for a man of resources. He still believed somewhat, though rather vaguely, in his resources.

A few days after Murdoch's departure there came to Broxton, on a visit of inspection, a dignitary of great magnitude—a political economist, a Member of Parliament. Above all other things he was absorbed in the fortunes of the manufacturing districts. He had done the trades-unions the honour of weighing their cause and reasoning with them, he had parleyed with the strikers and held meetings with the masters. He had heard of Haworth and his extraordinary stand against the outbreak, and was curious to see him.

He came as the guest of one of the county families, who regarded Haworth and his success a subject worth enlarging upon. He was taken to the Works and presented to their master.

Haworth met him with little enthusiasm. He showed him over the place, but maintained his taciturnity. He was not even moved to any exhibition of gratitude on being told that he had done wonders.

The *finale* of the visit was a stately dinner given by the county family. Haworth and the member were the features of the festivity, and speeches were made which took a congratulatory and even laudatory turn.

“I can’t go,” Ffrench cried, piteously, when Haworth came to his room at the bank with the news. He turned quite white and sank back into his chair. “It is too much to ask. I—no. I am not strong enough.”

He felt himself as good as a dead man when Haworth turned about and strode up to him, livid, and opening and shutting his hands.

“Blast you!” he hissed through his teeth. “You did it! *You!* And you shall pay for it as long as I’m nigh to make you!”

Saint Méran was among the guests, and Miss Ffrench, whose wonderful beauty attracted the dignitary’s eye at once. Years after he remem-

bered and spoke of her. He glanced toward her when he rose to make his after-dinner speech, and caught her eye and was somewhat confused by it. But he was very eloquent. The master of Haworth's was his inspiration and text. His resources, his strength of will, his giant enterprises, his readiness and daring at the moment when all was at hazard—these were matters, indeed, for eloquence.

Haworth sat leaning forward upon the table. He played with his wine-glass, turning it round and round and not spilling a drop of the ruby liquid. Sometimes he glanced at the orator with a smile which no one exactly understood, oftener he kept his eyes fixed upon the full wine-glass.

When at length the speaker sat down with a swift final glance at Rachel Ffrench, there was a silence of several seconds. Everybody felt that a reply was needed. Haworth turned his wine-glass two or three times without raising his eyes, but at last, just as the pause was becoming embarrassing, he looked across the table at Ffrench, who sat opposite.

“I'm not a speech-making chap myself,” he

said. "My partner is. He'll say my say for me."

He gave Ffrench a nod. That gentleman had been pale and distracted through all the courses; now he became paler than ever. He hesitated, glanced around him, at the waiting guest and at Haworth, who nodded again,—and then rose.

It was something unusual that Mr. Ffrench should hang back and show himself unready. He began his speech of thanks in his partner's name falteringly, and as if at a loss for the commonest forms of expression. He replied to the member's compliments with hesitation, he spoke of the difficulties they had encountered with a visibly strong effort, he touched upon their success and triumph with such singular lack of exultation that those who listened began to exchange looks of questioning, and suddenly in the midst of his wanderings and struggles at recovering himself, he broke off and begged leave to sit down.

"I am ill," he said. "I have—been—indisposed for some time. I must crave your pardon,

and—and my partner's for my inability to say what—what I would wish.”

He sat down amid many expressions of sympathy. The plea accounted for his unusual demeanour, it was thought. The member himself sought an interview with him, in which he expressed his regret and his sense of the fact that nothing was more natural than that the result of so long bearing a weight of responsibility should be a strain upon the nervous system and a consequent loss of physical strength.

“ You must care for yourself, my dear sir,” he added. “ Your firm—nay, the country—cannot afford to lose an element like yourself at such a crisis.”

On the morning following he left Broxton. On his way to the station he was moved to pay a final visit to Haworth at the Works.

“ I congratulate you,” he said, with much warmth, on shaking hands with him. “ I congratulate England upon your determination and indomitable courage and upon your wonderful success.”

There was a good deal of talk about Murdoch during his absence. The story of the attack and of Haworth's repulse of the attacking party became a popular incident. Mr. Reddy and his companions disappeared from the scene with promptness. Much interest was manifested in the ultimate success of the model, which had previously been regarded with a mingling of indifference and disfavour as not "loike to coom to owt." The results of its agreeably disappointing people by "coming to owt" were estimated at nothing short of a million per annum.

"Th' chap 'll roll i' brass," it was said. "Haworth 'll be nowheer. Happen th' lad 'll coom back an' set up a Works agen him. An' he coom here nowt but a workin' chap a few year sin'!"

The two women in the little house in the narrow street heard the story of the attack only through report. They had no letters.

"I won't write," Murdoch had said. "You shall not be troubled by prospects that might end in nothing. You will hear nothing from me till I come and tell you with my own lips that I have won or failed."

In the days of waiting Christian proved her strength. She would not let her belief be beaten or weighed down. She clung to it in spite of what she saw hour by hour in the face of the woman who was her companion.

“I have lived through it before.”

It was not put into words, but she read it in her eyes and believed in spite of it.

He had been away two weeks, and he returned, as his father had done, at night.

The women were sitting together in the little inner room. They were not talking or working, though each had work in her hands. It was Christian who heard him first. She threw down her work and stood up.

“He is here,” she cried. “He is coming up the step.”

She was out in the narrow entry and had thrown the door open before he had time to open it with his key.

The light fell upon his dark pale face and showed a strange excitement in it. He was

dishevelled and travel-worn, but his eyes were bright. His first words were enough.

"It is all right," he said, in an exultant voice.
"It is a success. Where is my mother?"

He had taken her hand as if without knowing what he did and fairly dragged her into the room. His mother had risen and stood waiting.

"It is a success," he cried out to her. "It is what he meant it to be—I have finished his work."

She turned from him to the girl, uttering a low cry of appeal.

"Christian!" she said, "Christian!"

The girl went to her and made her sit down, and knelt before her, clasping her arms about her waist, and uplifting her glowing young face. At the moment her beauty became such a splendour that Murdoch himself saw it with wonder.

"It is finished," she said. "And it is he who has finished it! Is not that enough?"

"Yes," she answered, "but—but——"

And the words died upon her lips, and she sat looking before her into vacancy, and trembling.

Murdoch threw himself on the sofa and lay there, his hands clasped above his head.

“I shall be a rich man,” he said, as if to himself, “a rich man—and it is nothing—but it is done.”

CHAPTER XXII.

"TH' ON'Y ONE AS ISNA A FOO'."

THE next day all Broxton knew the story.

"Well, he wur na so soft after aw," more than one excellent matron remarked.

Mr. Ffrench heard the news from his valet in the morning. He had been very unwell for several days. He had eaten nothing and slept very little, and had been obliged to call in his physician, who pronounced his case the result of too great mental strain, and prescribed rest. He came down to breakfast with an unwholesome face and trifled with his food without eating it. He glanced furtively at Rachel again and again.

"I shall not go to the bank to-day," he said timorously at last. "I am worse than ever. I shall remain at home and try to write letters and rest. Are—are you going out?"

"Yes," she answered.

“Oh.” Then, after a pause, “I saw Briarley yesterday, and he said Mrs. Dixon was very ill. You sometimes go there, I believe ?”

“Yes.”

“Suppose—suppose you call this morning to inquire. It looks well to show a—a sort of interest in them. You might take something nourishing with you.”

He flinched when she raised her eyes and let them rest a moment upon him. Her look was strongly suggestive of the fact that she could better rely upon the result of her own calculations concerning him than upon the truth of his replies, if she deigned to ask him questions.

“I thought,” he faltered, “that it would look well to evince some interest as the man has been in our employ, and you have had the woman about the house.”

“Certainly,” she replied, “it would be well enough. I will go.”

After breakfast she ordered the carriage and went to her room and made her toilette with some care. Why she did so was best known to herself. Nothing is more certain than that she

scarcely expected to produce a great effect upon Granny Dixon. The truth was, she would have made her visit to the Briarleys' in any case, and was not in the least moved thereto by her father's unexpected anxiety.

But when she reached the cottage and entered it, she began immediately to repent having come. A neighbour woman sat nursing the youngest Briarley; there was a peculiar hush upon the house and the windows were darkened. She drew back with a feeling of alarm and annoyance.

"What is the matter?" she demanded impatiently of the woman. "Why have you darkened the room?"

"Th' owd lass is deein'," was the business-like answer, "an' they're ha'in' some trouble wi' her. She conna even dee loike other foak."

She drew back, her annoyance becoming violent repulsion. She turned pale, and her heart began to beat violently. She knew nothing of death, and was not fearless of it. Her inveterate calm failed her at thus being brought near it.

"I will go away," she said.

And she would have gone, but at that moment there arose a sound of voices in the inner room—Mrs. Briarley's and Janey's, and above theirs Granny Dixon's, brokenly, and yet with what seemed terrible loudness in the hush of the house.

“Bring her i' here!” she was saying. “Bring her i' here an' mak' her—do it!”

And then out came Mrs. Briarley, looking fagged and harassed.

“I ax thy pardon, Miss,” she said, “but she says she wants thee. She says she wants thee to be a witness to summat.”

“I will not go,” she replied. “I—am going away. I—never saw any one before—in that condition.”

But the terrible voice raised itself again, and, despite her terror and anger, held and controlled her.

“I see her!”, it cried. “Mak' her coom in. I knowed her gran'feyther—when I wur a lass—seventy year ago!”

“She will na harm thee,” said Mrs. Briarley. And partly because of a dread fascination, and

partly because the two women regarded her with such amazement, she found herself forced to give way and enter.

It was a small room, and dark and low. The bed was a huge four-poster which had belonged to Granny Dixon herself in her young days. The large-flowered patterns of its chintz hangings were faded with many washings.

She was nothing but skin and bone, and the eyes which stared and shone in the gloom—only these seemed left of her, and the voice, which appeared to have lost nothing of its power.

"She's been speaking awmost i' a whisper till to-day," explained Mrs. Briarley, under her breath, "an' aw at onct th' change set in, an' It coom back as loud as ivver."

She lifted her hands, beckoning with crooked fingers.

"Coom tha here," she commanded.

Rachel Ffrench went to her slowly. She had no colour left, and all her *hauteur* could not steady her voice.

"What do you want?" she asked, standing close beside the bed.

For a few seconds there was silence, in which the large eyes wandered from the border of her rich dress to the crown of her hair. Then Granny Dixon spoke out :

“ Wheer'st flower ?” she cried. “ Tha'st getten it on thee again. I con smell it.”

It was true that she wore it at her throat as she had done before. A panic of disgust took possession of her as she recollect ed it. It was as if they two were somehow bound together by it. She caught at it with tremulous fingers, and would have flung it away, but it fell from her uncertain clasp upon the bed, and she would not have touched it for worlds.

“ Gi' it to me !” commanded Granny Dixon.

“ Pick it up for her,” she said, turning to Mrs. Briarley, and it was done, and the shrivelled fingers held it and the old eyes devoured it.

“ He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole,” proclaimed the Voice, “ an' he wur a han'some chap —seventy year ago.”

“ Did you send for me to tell me that ?” demanded Rachel Ffrench.

Granny Dixon turned on her pile of pillows.

"Nay," she said, "an' I'm—forgettin'."

There was a gasp between the two last words, as if suddenly her strength was failing her.

"Get thee a pen—an'—an' write summat," she ordered.

"Get it quickly," said Rachel Ffrench, "and let me humour her and go."

She had noticed the little gap between the words herself, and the next instant had seen a faint gray pallor spread itself over the old woman's face.

"Get the pen and paper," she repeated, "and call in the woman."

They brought her the pen and paper and called the woman, who came in stolidly, ready for any emergency. Then they waited for commands, but for several seconds there was a dead pause, and Granny Dixon laid back, staring straight before her.

"Quick!" said Rachel Ffrench. "What do you want?"

Granny Dixon rose by a great effort upright from her pillows. She pointed at Mrs. Briarley with the sharp, bony forefinger.

“ I—leave it—aw—to *her*,” she proclaimed,
“—ivvery penny! She’s th’ on’y one among ’em
as is na a foo’!”

And then she fell back, and panted and stared again.

Mrs. Briarley lifted her apron and burst into tears.

“ She means th’ brass,” she wailed. “ Eh!
Poor owd lass, who’d ha’ thowt it!”

“ Do you mean,” asked Rachel Ffrench, “ that you wish her to have your money?”

A nod was the answer, and Mrs. Briarley shed sympathetic tears again. Here was a reward for her labours indeed.

What she wrote Miss Ffrench scarcely knew. In the end there was her own name signed below, and a black, scrawling mark from Granny Dixon’s hand. The woman who had come in made her mark also.

“ Mak’ a black un,” said the testatrix. “ Let’s ha’ it plain.”

Then, turning to Rachel :

“ Does ta want to know wheer th’ money come fro’? Fro’ Will Ffrench—fro’ *him*. He wur one

o' th' gentry when aw wur said an' done—an' I wur a han'some lass."

When it was done they all stood and looked at each other. Granny Dixon lay back upon her pillows, drawing sharp breaths. She was looking only at Rachel Ffrench. She seemed to have forgotten all the rest of them, and what she had been doing. All that was left of the Voice was a loud, halting whisper.

"Wheer's th' flower?" she said. "I conn a smell it."

It was in her hand.

Rachel Ffrench drew back.

"Let me go," she said to Mrs. Briarley. "I cannot stay here."

"He used to wear 'em i' his button-hole," she heard, "—seventy year ago—an' she's th' very moral on him." And scarcely knowing how, she made her way past the women, and out of the house and into the fresh air and sunshine.

"Drive home," she said to the coachman, "as quickly as possible."

She leaned back in a corner of the carriage

shuddering. Suddenly she burst into wild tears.

But there were no traces of her excitement when she reached home. She descended from the carriage looking quite herself, and after dismissing it went up to her own room.

About half an hour later she came down and went into the library. Her father was not there, and on inquiring as to his whereabouts from a servant passing the open door, she was told that he had gone out.

He had been writing letters, it was evident. His chair stood before his desk, and there was an addressed envelope lying upon it.

She went to the desk and glanced at it without any special motive for doing so. It was addressed to herself. She opened and read it.

“My dear Rachel,” it ran. “In all probability we shall not meet again for some time. I find myself utterly unable to remain to meet the blow which must inevitably fall before many days are over. The anxiety of the past year has made me a coward. I ask your forgiveness for what you may call my desertion of you.

We have never relied upon each other much, and
you at least are not included in my ruin. You
will not be called upon to share my poverty.
You had better return to Paris at once. With a
faint hope that you will at least pity me,

I remain,

Your affectionate father,

GERARD FFRENCH."

CHAPTER XXIII.

“HAWORTH'S IS DONE WITH.”

ALMOST at the same moment, Haworth was reading in his room at the Works the letter which had been left for himself.

“I have borne as much as I can bear,” it ended. “My punishment for my folly is that I am a ruined man and a fugitive. My presence upon the scene, when the climax comes, would be of no benefit to either of us. Pardon me, if you can, for the wrong I have unintentionally done you. My ill luck was sheerly the result of circumstances. Even yet, I cannot help thinking that there were great possibilities in my plans. But you will not believe this, and I will say no more.

“In haste,
“FRENCH.”

When Rachel Ffrench had finished reading her note, she had lighted a taper and held the paper to it until it was reduced to ashes, and had afterward turned away merely a shade paler and colder than before. Haworth having finished the reading of Ffrench's letter, sat for a few seconds staring down at it as it lay before him on the table. Then he burst into a brutal laugh.

After that he sat stupefied—his elbows on the table, his head on his hands. He did not move for half an hour.

The Works saw very little of him during the day. He remained alone in his room, not showing himself, and one of the head clerks, coming in from the bank on business, went back mystified, and remarked in confidence to a companion, that "things had a queer look."

He did not leave the Works until late, and then went home. All through the evening his mother watched him in her old tender way. She tried to interest him with her history of the Briarleys' bereavement and unexpected good fortune. She shed tears over her recital.

"So old, my dear," she said; "old enough to

have outlived her own—an' her ways a little hard," wiping her eyes. "I'd like to be grieved for more, Jem—though perhaps it's only nat'r'al as it should be so. She hadn't no son to miss her as you'll miss me. *I* shouldn't like to be the last, Jem."

He had been listening mechanically, and he started and turned to her.

"The last?" he said. "Ay, it's a bit hard."

It was as if she had suggested a new thought to him of which he could not rid himself at once. He kept looking at her, his eyes wandering over her frail little figure and innocent old face restlessly.

"But I haven't no fear," she went on, "though we never know what's to come. But you're a strong man, and there's not like to be many more years for me—though I'm so well an' happy."

"You might live a score," he answered in an abstracted way, his eyes still fixed on her.

"Not without you," she returned. "It's you that's life to me—an' strength—an' peace."

The innocent tears were in her voice again, and her eyes were bright with them.

He lay down a while but could not lie still. He got up and came and stood near her and talked, and then moved here and there, picking up one thing and another, holding them idly for a few seconds and then setting them aside. At last she was going to bed, and came to bid him good night. He laid his hand on her shoulder caressingly.

“There's never been aught like trouble between us two,” he said. “I've been a quiet enough chap, and different somehow—when I've been nigh you. What I've done, I've done for your sake and for the best.”

In the morning the Works were closed, the doors of the bank remained unopened, and the news spread like wildfire from house to house and from street to street and beyond the limits of the town—until before noon it was known through the whole country-side that Ffrench had fled and Jem Haworth was a ruined man.

It reached the public ear in the first instance

in the ordinary commonplace manner through the individuals who had suddenly descended upon the place to take possession. A great crowd gathered about the closed gates and murmured and stared and anathematized.

“Theer's been summat up for mony a month,” said one sage. “I've seed it. He wur na hissen, wur na Haworth.”

“Nay,” said another, “that he wur na. Th' chap has na been o' a decent spree sin' Ffrench coom.”

“Happen,” added a third, “*that* wur what started him on th' road downhill. A chap is na good for much as has na reg'lar habits.”

“Ay, an' Haworth wur reg'lar enow when he set up. Good Lord! who'd ha' thowt o' that chap i' bankrup'cy !”

At the outset the feeling manifested was not unamiable to Haworth, but it was not very long before the closing of the bank dawned upon the public in a new light. It meant loss and ruin. The first man who roused the tumult was a burly farmer, who dashed into the town on a sweating horse, spurring it as he rode and wearing a red

and furious face. He left his horse at an inn, and came down to the bank, booted and spurred, and whip in hand.

“Wheer's Ffrench ?” he shouted to the smaller crowd attracted there, and whose views as to the ultimate settlement of things were extremely vague. “Wheer's Ffrench an' wheer's Haworth ?”

Half a dozen voices volunteered information regarding Ffrench, but no one knew anything of Haworth. He might be in a dozen places, but no one had yet seen him or heard of his whereabouts. The man began to push his way toward the building, swearing hotly. He mounted the steps and struck violently on the door with his whip.

“I'll mak' him hear if he's shut hissen i' here,” he cried. “Th' shifty villain's got ivvery shillin' o' brass I've been savin' for my little wench for th' last ten year. I'll ha' it back, if it's to be gotten.”

“Tha'lt ne'er see it again,” shouted a voice in the crowd. “Tha'dst better ha' stuck to th' owd stockin', lad.”

Then the uproar began. One luckless depositor

after another was added to the crowd. They might easily be known among the rest by their pale faces. Some of them were stunned into silence, but the greater portion of them were loud and passionate in their outcry. A few women hung on the outskirts, wiping their eyes every now and then with their aprons, and sometimes bursting into audible fits of weeping.

“ I've been goin' out charrin' for four year,” said one, “ to buy silks and satins fur th' gentry. Yo' nivver seed *her* i' owt else.”

And all knew whom they meant, and joined in their shouts of rage.

Sometimes it was Ffrench against whom their anger was most violent—Ffrench, who had been born among them a gentleman, and who should have been gentleman enough not to plunder and deceive them. And again it was Haworth—Haworth, who had lived as hard as any of them, and knew what their poverty was, and should have done fairly by them, if ever man should.

In the course of the afternoon Murdoch, gathering no news of Haworth elsewhere, went to his house. A panic-stricken servant let him

in and led him into the great room where he had spent his first evening long ago.

Despite its splendour, it looked empty and lifeless, but when he entered, there rose from a carved and satin upholstered chair in one corner a little old figure in a black dress—Jem Haworth's mother, who came to him with a white but calm face.

“Sir,” were her greeting words, “where is he?”

“I came to see him,” he answered. “I thought——”

“No,” she interrupted, “he is not here. He has not been here since morning.”

She began to tremble, but she shed no tears.

“There's been a good many to ask for him,” she went on. “Gentlemen, an' them as was rough, an' didn't mind me bein' a woman an' old. They were harder than you'd think, an'—troubled as I've been, I was glad he was not here to see 'em. But I'd be more comfortable if I could rightly understand.”

“I can only tell you what I know,” he said.

“It isn't much. I have only gathered it from people on the streets.”

He led her back to her chair, and did not loosen his light grasp on her hand while he told her the story as he had heard it. His own mood was so subdued that it was easier than he had thought to use words which would lighten the first weight of the blow.

She asked no questions after his explanation was over.

“He's a poor man,” she said at last,—“a poor man, but—we was poor before.”

Suddenly her tears burst forth.

“They've said hard things to me to-day,” she cried. “I don't believe 'em, Jem, my dear—now less than ever.”

He comforted her as best he could. He could easily understand what they had told her, how much of the truth and how much of angry falsehood.

“When he comes back,” she said, “I shall be here to meet him. Wherever he is, an' however much he's broke down with trouble, he knows that. He'll come here to-night, an' I shall be here.”

Before he went away he asked if he might send Christian or his mother to her. But though she thanked him, she refused.

“I know how good they be,” she said, “an’ what a comfort in the lonesomeness, but when he comes he’ll want to be alone, an’ a unfamiliar face might trouble him.”

But he did not come back. The day went on, and the excitement increased and waned by turns. The crowd grew and surged about the bank and shouted itself hoarse, and would have broken a few windows if it had not been restrained by the police force, who appeared upon the field; and there were yells for Haworth and for Ffrench; but by this time Mr. Ffrench had reached Rotterdam, and Haworth was—no one knew where, since he had not been seen at all. And when at length dusk fell upon the town, the crowd had dwindled away and gone home by ones and twos, and in Jem Haworth's house sat his mother, watching and waiting, and straining her ears to catch every passing sound.

She had kept up her courage bravely through the first part of the day, but the strangers who

came one after the other, and sometimes even two or three together, to demand her son with loud words and denunciations, and even threats, were a sore trial to her. Some of them flung their evil stories at her without remorse, taking it for granted that they were nothing new to her ears, and even those who had some compunction muttered among themselves and hinted angrily at what the others spoke outright. Her strength began to give way, and she quailed and trembled before them, but she never let their words pass without a desperate effort to defend her boy. Then they stared or laughed at her, or went away in sullen silence, and she was left to struggle with her grief and terror alone until some new call was made upon her, and she must bear all again. When the twilight came she was still alone, and sat in the darkened room battling against a dread which had crept slowly upon her. Of all those who had come none had known where he was. They did not know in the town, and he had not come back.

“He might go,” she whispered, “but he'd not go without me. He's been true and fond of his

mother, let them say what they will. He'd never leave me alone.”

Her thoughts went back over the long years from his birth to the day of his highest success. She remembered how he had fought with fate, and made his way, and refused to be conquered. She thought of the wealth he had won, the power, the popularity, and of his boast that he had never been beaten, and she began to sob in the shadow of her corner.

“He's lost it all,” she cried. “An' he won it with his own hands an' worked for it an' bore up agen a world! An' it's gone!”

It was when she came to this point that her terror seized on her as it had never done before. She got up shaking in every limb.

“I'll go to him myself,” she said. “Who should go to him but his mother? Who should find him an' be a help to him if I can't? Jem—Jem, my dear, it's *me* that's comin' to you—*me!*”

He had been sitting in a small back office in the Bank all through the day when they had

been calling and searching for him. He had got in early and locked the door and waited, knowing well enough all that was to come. It was no feeling of fear that made him keep hidden ; he had done with fear if he had ever felt it in his life. He knew what he was going to do and he laid his plans coolly. He was to stay here and do the work that lay before him and leave things as straight as he could, and then at night when all was quiet he would make his way out in the dark and go to the Works. It was only a fancy, this, of going to the Works, but he clung to it persistently.

He had never been clearer-headed in his life—only, sometimes as he was making a calculation or writing a letter he would dash down his work and fall to cursing.

“There's not another chap in England that had done it,” he would say, “and it's gone !—it's gone !—it's gone !”

Then again he would break into a short laugh, remembering the M. P. and his speech and poor Ffrench's stumbling, overwhelmed reply to it. When he heard the crowd shouting and hooting

at the front, he went into a room facing the street and watched them through a chink in the shutter. He heard the red-faced farmer's anathemas, and swore a little himself, knowing his story was true.

"Tha shalt have all Haworth can give, chaps," he muttered, "an' welcome. He'll tak' nowt with him."

He laughed again but suddenly stopped, and walked back into the little office silently and waited there.

At night-fall he went out of a back door and slipped through unfrequented by-ways, feeling his heart beat with heavy thuds as he went. Nothing stood in his way and he got in, as he believed he should. The instant his foot crossed the threshold a change came upon him. He forgot all else but what lay before him. He was less calm, and in some little hurry.

He reached his room and lighted the gas dimly—only so that he could see to move about. Then he went to his desk and opened it and took out one of a pair of pistols, speaking aloud as he did so.

“ Here,” he said, “ is the end of Jem Haworth.”

He knew where to aim, the heavy thuds marked the spot for him, and his hand was steady.

He had said he would count three before he pulled the trigger, and he had counted but two when he stopped and his hand fell at his side with his weapon in it.

For at the door his mother stood. In an instant she had fallen upon her knees and dragged herself toward him and was clinging to his hand.

“ No—Jem !” she panted. “ No, not that, my dear—Jesus Christ forbid ! ”

He staggered back though she still clung to him.

“ How,” he faltered, “ how did you come here ? ”

“ The Lord led me,” she sobbed. “ He put it into my heart and showed me the way, an' you had forgot the door, Jem—thank God ! ”

“ You—saw—what I was going to do ? ”

“ What you *was* goin' to do, but what you'll never do, Jem, an' me to live an' suffer when it's

done—me as you've been so good an' such a comfort to.”

In the dim light she knelt sobbing at his feet.

“ Let me sit down,” he said. “ And sit down nigh me. I've summat to tell you.”

But though he sank into the chair she would not get up, but kept her place in spite of him and went on.

“ To-day there have been black tales told you ?” he said.

“ Yes,” she cried, “ but——”

“ They're true,” he said, “ th' worst on 'em.”

“ No—no !”

He stopped her by going on monotonously as if she had not spoken.

“ Think of the worst you've ever known—you've not known much—and then say to yourself, ‘he's worse a hundred times ;’ think of the blackest you have ever known to be done, and then say to yourself, ‘ what he's done's blacker yet.’ If any chap has told you I've stood at naught until there was next to naught I'd left undone, he spoke true. If there was any one told you I set th' decent ones by the ears and laughed

’em in the face, he spoke true. If any o’ em said I was a dread and a by-word, they spoke true too. The night you came there were men and women in th’ house that couldn’t look you in th’ face, and that felt shame for th’ first time in their lives—mayhap—because you didn’t know what they were, an’ took ’em to be as innocent as yourself. There’s not a sin I haven’t tasted, nor a wrong I’ve not done. I’ve had murder in my mind, an’ planned it. I’ve been mad for a woman not worth even what Jem Haworth had to give her—and I’ve won all I’d swore I’d win—an’ lost it ! Now tell me if there’s aught else to do but what I’ve set my mind on ? ”

She clung to his heavy hand as she had not clung to it before, and laid her withered cheek upon it and kissed it. Bruised and crushed as she was with the blows he had dealt, she would not let it go free yet. Her words came from her lips a broken cry, with piteous sobs between them. But she had her answer ready.

“ That as I’ve thanked God for all my life,” she said, “ He’ll surely give me in the end. He couldn’t hold it back—I’ve so believed an’ been

grateful to Him. If there hadn't been in you what would make a good man, my dear, I couldn't have been so deceived an' so happy. No—not deceived—that ain't the word, Jem—the good was there. You've lived two lives, maybe,—but one was good, thank God ! You've been a good son to me. You've never hurt me, an' it was your love as hid from me the wrong you did. You did love me, Jem—I won't give that up—never. There's nothing you've done as can stand agen that with her as is your mother. You loved me, an' was my own son—my boy as was a comfort an' a pride to me from the first.”

He watched her with a stunned look.

“ You didn't believe *them*,” he said hoarsely, “ and you don't believe *me* ! ”

She put her hand to her heart and almost smiled.

“ It hasn't come home to me yet,” she said. “ I don't think it ever will.”

He looked helplessly toward the pistol on the table. He knew it was all over and he should not use it.

“What,” he said, in the same hoarse voice, “must I do?”

“Get up,” she said, “and come with me. I'm a old woman but my heart's strong, an' we've been poor before. We'll go away together an' leave it all behind—all the sorrow of it an' the sin an' the shame. The life I *thought* you lived, my dear, is to be lived yet. Theer's places where they wont know us, an' where we can begin again. Get up and come with me.”

He scarcely grasped what she meant at first.

“With you?” he repeated. “You want me to go now?”

“Yes,” she answered, “for Christ's sake, my dear, now.”

He began to see the meaning and possibility of her simple, woman's plan, and got up ready to follow her. And then he found that the want of food and the long day had worn upon him so that he was weak. She put her arm beneath his and tried to support him.

“Lean on me, my dear,” she said. “I'm stronger than you think.”

They went out, leaving the empty room and

the pistol on the table and the dim light burning. And then they had locked the gate and were outside with the few stars shining above and the great black Works looming up before them.

He stopped a moment to look back and up, and remembered the key. Suddenly he raised it in his hand and flung it across the top of the locked gate; they heard it fall inside upon the pavement with a clang.

“They'll wonder how it came there,” he said. “They'll take down the name to-morrow. ‘Haworth's’ is done with !”

He turned to her and said, “Come.”

His voice was a little stronger. They went down the lane together, and were lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“A BIT O' GOOD BLACK.”

GRANNY DIXON was interred with pomp and ceremony, or, at least, with what appeared pomp and ceremony in the eyes of the lower social stratum of Broxton.

Mrs. Briarley's idea concerning the legacy left her had been of the vaguest. Her revered relative had shrewdly kept the amount of her possessions strictly to herself, if, indeed, she knew definitely what they were. She had spent but little, discreetly living upon the expectations of her kindred. She had never been known to give anybody anything, and had dealt out the money to be expended upon her own wants with a close hand. Consequently, the principal, which had been a mystery from the first, had accumulated in an agreeably steady manner.

Between her periodic fits of weeping in her character of sole legatee, Mrs. Briarley speculated with matronly prudence upon the possibility of the interest even amounting to “a matter o’ ten or fifteen shillin’ a week,” and found the pangs of bereavement materially softened thereby. There was a great deal of consolation to be derived from “ten or fifteen shillin’ a week.”

“I’ll ha’ a bit o’ good black,” she said, “an’ we’ll gi’ her a noice buryin’.” Only a severe sense of duty to the deceased rescued her from tempering her mournfulness with an air of modest cheer.

The “bit o’ good black” was the first investment. There was a gown remarkable for much stiffness of lining and a tendency to crackle upon every movement of the wearer, and there was a shawl of great weight and size, and a bonnet which was a marvel of unmitigated affliction as expressed by floral decorations of black crape and beads.

“Have thee beads i’ thy bonnet an’ a pair o’ black gloves, mother,” said Janey, “an’ tha’ll be

dressed up for onct i' thy loife. Eh! but I'd loike to go i' mournin' mysen."

"Ay, and so tha should, Jane Ann, if I could afford it," replied Mrs. Briarley. "Theer's nowt loike a bit o' black fur makkin foak look dressed. Theer's summat cheerful about it, i' a quoiet way. But nivver thee moind, tha'l get these here things o' moine when I'm done wi' 'em, an' happen tha'l ha' growed up to fit th' bonnet by then."

The occasion of the putting on of the festive garb was Mrs. Briarley's visit to Manchester to examine into the state of her relative's affairs, and such was the effect produced upon the mind of Mr. Briarley by the air of high life surrounding him that he retired into the late Mrs. Dixon's chair and wept copiously.

"I nivver thowt to see thee dressed up i' so much luckshury, Sararann," he said, "an' it sets me back. Tha does na look loiike thysen. Tha looks as though tha moight be one o' th' nobility, goin' to th' Duke o' Wellington's funeral to ride behoind th' hearse. I'm not worthy o' thee.

I’ve nivver browt thee luck. I’m a misforchnit cha——”

“If tha’d shut thy mouth an’ keep it shut till some one axes thee to oppen it, tha’d do well enow,” interposed Mrs. Briarley, with a manifest weakening toward the culprit even in the midst of her sternness. “He is na so bad,” she used to say, leniently, “if he hadna been born a foo’.”

But this recalled to Mr. Briarley such memories as only plunged him into deeper depression.

“Theer is na many as axes me to oppen it i’ these days, Sararann,” he said with mournfulness. “It has na oppen’t to mich purpose for many a day. Even th’ hospittyblest on ‘em gets toired o’ a chap as sees nowt but misforchin. I mowt as well turn teetotal an’ git th’ credit on it. Happen theer’s a bit o’ pleasure to be gotten out o’ staggerin’ through th’ streets wi’ a banner i’ th’ Whit-week possession. I dunnot know. I’ve thowt mysen as happen th’ tea a chap has to drink when th’ excitement’s ower, an’ th’ speeches ud a’most be a drorback even to that. But I mun say I’ve thowt o’ tryin’.”

It may be remarked that since Mrs. Briarley's sudden accession to fortune, Mr. Briarley's manner had been that of an humble and sincere penitent whose sympathies were slowly but surely verging toward the noble cause of temperance. He had repeatedly deplored his wanderings from the path of sobriety and rectitude with tearful though subdued eloquence, and frequently intimated a mournful inclination to “jine th' teetotals.” Though, strange to say, the effect of these sincere manifestations had not been such as to restore in the partner of his joys and sorrows that unlimited confidence which would allow of her confiding to his care the small amount he had once or twice feebly suggested her favouring him with “to settle wi” a violent and not to be pacified creditor of whom he stated he stood in bodily fear.

“I dunnot know as I ivver seed a chap as were as desp’rit ower a little,” he remarked. “It is na but eighteen pence, an’ he ses he’ll ha’ it, or—or see about it. He stands at th’ street corner—near th’ ‘Who’d ha’ Thowt it?’—an’ he

will na listen to owt. He says a chap as has coom i' to property can pay eighteen pence. He wunnot believe me,” weakly, “when I say as it is na me as has getten th’ brass, but yo’. It mak’s him worse to try to mak’ him understand. He will na believe me, an’ he’s a chap as would na stand back at owt. Theer wur a man i’ Marfort as owed him thrippence as he—he mashed i’to a jelly, Sararann—an’ it wur fur thrippence.”

“Ay,” said Mrs. Briarley, drily, “an’ theer’s no knowin’ what he’d do fur eighteen pence. Theer’s a bad look-out fur *thee*, sure enow!”

Mr. Briarley paused and surveyed her for a few seconds in painful silence. Then he looked at the floor, as if appealing to it for assistance, but even here he met with indifference, and his wounded spirit sought relief in meek protestations.

“Tha has na no confydence in me, Sararann,” he said. “Happen th’ teetotals would na ha’ neyther, happen they wouldn’t, an’ wheer’s th’ use o’ a chap thinkin’ o’ j’inin’ ‘em when they

mowt ha’ no confydence i’ him. When a mon’s fam’ly mistrusts him, an’ has na no belief in what he says, he canna help feelin’ as he is na encouraged. Tha is na encouragin’, Sararann—theer’s wheer it is.”

But when, after her visit to Manchester, Mrs. Briarley returned, even Mr. Briarley’s spirits rose, though under stress of circumstances and in private. On entering the house Mrs. Briarley sank into a chair, breathless and overawed.

“ It’s two pound ten a week, Janey ! ” she announced in a hysterical voice. “ An’ tha can ha’ thy black as soon as tha wants it.” And at once burst into luxurious weeping.

Janey dropped on to a stool, rolled her arms under her apron, and sat gasping.

“ Two pound ten a week ! ” she exclaimed. “ I dunnot believe it ! ”

But she was persuaded to believe by means of sound proof and solid argument, and even the proprieties were scarcely sufficient to tone down the prevailing emotion.

“ Theer’s a good deal to be getten wi’ two

pound ten a week,” soliloquised Mr. Briarley in his corner. “I’ve heerd o’ heads o’ fam’lies as wur ‘lowanced. Summat could be done wi’ three shillin’ a week. Wi’ four shillin’ a chap could be i’ parydise.”

But this, be it observed, was merely soliloquy, and timorously in the temporary security afforded by the prevailing excitement.

At the funeral the whole family appeared clothed in new garments of the most sombre description. There were three black coaches, and Mrs. Briarley was supported by numerous friends who alternately cheered and condoled with her.

“Tha mun remember,” they said, “as she’s better off, poor thing.”

Mr. Briarley, who had been adorned with a hat-band of appalling width and length, and furthermore inserted into a pair of gloves some inches too long in the fingers, overcame his emotion at this juncture sufficiently to make an endeavour to ingratiate himself. He withdrew his handkerchief from his face and addressed Mrs. Briarley.

“ Ay,” he said, “ tha mun bear up, Sararann. She *is* better off—happen—an' so are we.” And he glanced round with a faint smile, which, however, faded out with singular rapidity, and left him looking somewhat aghast.

CHAPTER XXV.

“IT WILL BE TO YOU.”

THEY found the key lying within the locked gate, and when they went in, the dim light burning and the pistol loaded upon the table. The great house stood empty with all its grandeur intact. The servants had been paid their wages a few days before the crash, and they went away. Nothing had been moved, nothing taken. The creditors, who found to their amazement that all was left in their hands to dispose of as they chose, agreed that this was not an orthodox case of absconding. Haworth was a more eccentric fellow than they had thought.

One man alone understood. This was Murdoch, who, amid all the buzz of excited amazement, said nothing even to those in his own house. When he heard the story of the pistol and the

key, his first thought was a sudden recollection of the silence of the great place at night—the deadness of it and the sense of desolation it brought. It was a terrible thing to remember this, and then picture a ruined man standing alone in the midst of it, a pistol in his hand and only the low light burning.

“ We did not understand each other very well,” he said drearily, “ but we were friends in our way.”

And the man's farewell as he stood at the carriage door in the shadow, came back to him again and again like an echo repeating itself.

“ If there's aught in what's gone by that's for me—remember it !”

Even before his return home, Murdoch had made up his mind as to what his course for the next few years was to be. His future was assured, and he might follow his idlest fancy.

But his fancies were not idle. They reached forward to freedom and new labours when the time came. He wanted to be alone, for a while at least, and he was to return to America. His

plan was to travel with a purpose in view, and to fill his life with work which would leave him little leisure.

Rachel Ffrench had not left her father's house yet. Saint Méran had gone away with some suddenness immediately after the dinner-party at which the political economist had reigned. Various comments had been made on his departure, but it was not easy to arrive at anything like a definite conclusion. Miss Ffrench was seen no more in the town. Only a few servants remained with her in the house, and these maintained that she was going to Paris to her father's sister, with whom she had lived before her return from abroad. They added that there was no change in her demeanour, that she had dismissed their companions without any explanation. One, it is true, thought she was rather thin, and had “gone off her looks”—but this version was not popular, and considered out of accordance with the ideal of her character held in the public mind.

“She does na care,” it was said. “*She* is na

hurt. *Her* brass is safe enow, an' that's aw as ud be loike to trouble her. Pale i'deed! She's too high an' moightly."

Murdoch made his preparations for departure as rapidly as possible. They were rather for his mother and Christian than for himself. They were to leave Broxton also, and he had found a home for them elsewhere. One day, as they sat in the little parlour, he rose hurriedly and went to Christian and took both her hands.

"Try to be happy," he said. "Try to be happy."

He spared no effort to make the future bright for them. He gave no thought to himself, his every hour was spent in thinking for and devising new comfort for them.

But at last all was ready, and there was but one day left to them.

The Works were still closed, and would not be reopened for some weeks, but he had obtained permission to go down to his room and remove his possessions if he chose. So on the morning of this last day he let himself into his "den," and

shut himself up in it. Once behind the closed doors, he began a strange labour. He emptied drawers and desk, and burnt every scrap of paper to ashes—drawings, letters, all! Then he destroyed the delicate models and every other remnant of his past labours. There was not so much as an envelope or blotting-pad remaining. When he had done he had made a clean sweep. The room was empty, cold, and bare. He sat down, at last, in the midst of its desolate orderliness.

At that moment a hand was laid upon the door-handle and the door opened; there was a rustle of a woman's dress—and Rachel Ffrench stood before him!

“What,” he said, rising slowly to meet her, “what are you doing here, in Heaven's name?”

She cast one glance around the bare room.

“It is true! You are going away!”

“Yes,” he answered, “I am going. I have done my last work here to-day.”

She made a step forward and stood looking at him. She spoke under her breath.

“Every one is going. My father has left me—I——”

A scarlet spot came out on her cheek, but she did not withdraw her eyes.

“Saint Méran has gone also.”

Gradually, as she looked at him, the blood receded from her face and left it like a mask of stone.

“I”—she began, in a sharp whisper, “do you not see? Do you not understand? Ah—my God!”

There was a chair near her and she fell into it, burying her face in the crushed velvet of her mantle as she bowed herself upon the table near.

“Hush!” she cried, “do not speak to me! That it should be I who stooped, and for this—for this! That having battled against my folly so long, I should have let it drag me to the dust at last!”

Her passionate sobs suffocated her. She could not check or control them. Her slender fingers writhed in their clasp upon each other.

“I never thought of *this*, God knows!” he

said, hoarsely, “though there have been hours when I could have sworn that you had loved me once. I have thought of all things, but never of this—never that you could repent.”

She lifted her head.

“That *I* should repent!” she cried. “Repent! Like this!”

“No,” he returned, “I never thought of that, I swear!”

“And it is you,” she cried, with scorn. “*You*, who stand there and look at me and tell me that it is all over!”

“Is it *my* fault that it is all over?” he demanded. “Is it?”

“No,” she answered, “that is my consolation.”

He drew nearer to her.

“You left me nothing,” he said,—“nothing. God knows what saved me. I do not. *You* loved me? You battled against your love?” He laughed aloud. “I was a madman under your window night after night. Forget it, if you can. I cannot. ‘Oh! that I shall have stooped for this,’ you say. No, it is that I who have

loved you should stand here with empty hands !”

She had bowed her face and was sobbing again. But suddenly she rose.

“ If I did not know you better,” she said, “ I should say this was revenge.”

“ It would be but a poor one,” he answered her coldly.

She supported herself with one hand on the chair's back.

“ I have fallen very low,” she said, “ so low that I was weaker than I thought. And now, as you say, ‘ it is over.’ Your hands are empty ! Oh ! it was a poor passion, and this is the fitting end for it ! ”

She moved a little toward the door and stopped.

“ Good-bye,” she said.

In a moment more all that was left was a subtle breath of flower-like fragrance in the atmosphere of the bare room.

It was an hour before he passed through the

iron gates, though there had been nothing left to be done inside.

He came out slowly, and having locked the gate, turned toward the Brookton road.

He was going to the little graveyard. It had been a dull gray day, but by the time he reached the place the sun had crept through the clouds and brightened them, and, noting it, he felt some vague comfort. It was a desolate place when there was no sun.

When he reached the mound he stood looking down. Since the night he had lain by it looking up at the sky and had made his resolve, the grass had grown longer and thicker, and turned from green to brown, and rustled as it moved.

He spoke aloud, just as he had done before.

“It is done,” he said. “Your thought was what you dreamed it would be. I have kept my word.”

He stopped as if for an answer. But it was very still—so still that the silence was like a Presence. And the mound at his feet lay golden

brown in the sunlight, even its long grass unstirred.

They left Broxton the next day, and in a week he set sail. As the ship moved away he stood leaning on the taffrail watching a figure upon the shore. It was a girl in a long cloak of gray, almost the colour of the mist in which she stood — a slender motionless figure — the dark young face turned seaward.

He watched her until he could see her face no longer ; but still she had not stirred.

“ When I return,” he said, scarcely conscious that he spoke, “ when I return—it will be to you.”

Then the grayness closed about her and she faded slowly from his sight.

THE END.



